

THE
WORKS

OF

WALTER SCOTT, Esq.

VOL. XXXIX.

ROMANCES VOL. XXX.

~~~~~  
ZWICKAU,

PRINTED FOR BROTHERS SCHUMANN.

1823.

(19)





*Laurens sc*

*The Bride, Vol. III.*



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The first of the month of January, 1780, the
British evacuated the city of Philadelphia and
moved to Lancaster, and then to York.

On the 26th of December, 1779, the British
evacuated the city of Lancaster and moved to York.

The British evacuated the city of York on the 19th of
November, 1779, and moved to Philadelphia. The
Continental Congress fled to Lancaster, and then to York,
and finally to Philadelphia on the 26th of September, 1777.

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TALES OF MY LANDLORD,

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED

BY

JEDEDIAH CLEISHBOTHAM.

*Hear, Land o' Cakes and brither Scots,
Frae Maidenkirk to Jonny Groats',
If there's a hole in a' your coats,
I rede ye tent it,
A chiel's amang you takin' notes,
An' faith he'll prent it.*
BURNS.

VOL. XIV.

THE BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR. P. 3.



ZWICKAU,

PRINTED FOR BROTHERS SCHUMANN.

1823.

TALES OF MY LANDLORD.

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED

BY

JEDEDIAH CLIFTON

Wear, I am of your and brother kind,
From childhood to your house,
If there's a hole in your coat,
I will be sure to
And which I found you still wear,
And which I still wear in
Honor.

Vol. XII.

The Blade of Linnæus, R. A.

NEW YORK

PRINTED FOR GEORGE BENTLEY

1823

CHAPTER XXII.

*And soon they spied the merry-men green,
And eke the coach and four.*

Duke upon Duke.

CRAIGENCELT set forth on his mission, so soon as his equipage was complete, prosecuted his journey with all diligence, and accomplished his commission with all the dexterity for which Bucklaw had given him credit. As he arrived with credentials from Mr Hayston of Bucklaw, he was extremely welcome to both ladies; and those who are prejudiced in favour of a new acquaintance can, for a time at least, discover excellencies in his very faults, and perfections in his deficiencies. Although both ladies were accustomed to good society, yet, being predetermined to find out an agreeable and well-behaved gentleman in Mr Hayston's friend, they

succeeded wonderfully in imposing on themselves. It is true that Craigengelt was now handsomely dressed, and that was a point of no small consequence. But independent of outward shew, his blackguard impudence of address was construed into honourable bluntness, becoming his supposed military profession; his hectoring passed for courage, and his sauciness for wit. Lest, however, any one should think this a violation of probability, we must add, in fairness to the two ladies, that their discernment was greatly blinded, and their favour propitiated, by the opportune arrival of Captain Craigengelt, in the moment when they were longing for a third hand to make a party at tredrille, in which, as in all games, whether of chance or skill, that worthy person was a great proficient.

When he found himself established in favour, his next point was how best to use it for the furtherance of his patron's views. He found Lady Ashton prepossessed strongly in favour of the motion, which Lady Blenkinsop, partly from regard to her kinswoman, partly from the spirit of match-making, had not hesitated to propose to her; so that his task was an easy one. Bucklaw, reformed from his prodigality, was just the sort of husband which she desired to have for her Shepherdess of Lammermoor; and while

the marriage gave her fortune, and a gentleman for her husband, Lady Ashton was of opinion that her destinies would be fully and most favourably accomplished. It so chanced, also, that Bucklaw, among his new acquisitions, had gained the management of a little political interest in a neighbouring county, where the Douglas family originally held large possessions. It was one of the bosom-hopes of Lady Ashton, that her eldest son, Sholto, should represent this county in the British Parliament, and she saw this alliance with Bucklaw as a circumstance which might be highly favourable to her wishes.

Craigengelt, who in his way by no means wanted sagacity, no sooner discovered in what quarter the wind of Lady Ashton's wishes sate, than he trimmed his course accordingly. "There was little to prevent Bucklaw himself from sitting for the county — he must carry the heat — must walk the course. Two cousins-german — six more distant kinsmen, his factor and his chamberlain, were all hollow votes — and the Girlinghame interest had always carried, betwixt love and fear, about as many more — But Bucklaw cared no more about riding the first horse, and that sort of thing, than he, Craigengelt, did about a game at birkie — it was a pity his interest was not in good guidance."

All this Lady Ashton drank in with willing

TALES OF MY LANDLORD.

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED

JEREDIAN CHRISTOPHER

Here, Land o' Cakes and Fudge, I
Have discovered in some place,
If there's a hole in a wall,
I will be sure to find it,
And while I'm looking for it,
I'll tell you what I find it.
I'll tell you what I find it.

Vol. XII.

THE BRIDE OF LAMINGTON, &c.

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WICKHAM

PRINTED FOR AND SOLD BY

1823

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All this Lady Ashton drank in with willing

and attentive ears, resolving internally to be herself the person who should take the management of the political influence of her destined son-in-law, for the benefit of her eldest born, Sholto, and all other parties concerned.

When he found her ladyship thus favourably disposed, the Captain proceeded, to use his employer's phrase, to set spurs to her resolution, by hinting at the situation of matters at Ravenswood Castle, the long residence which the heir of that family had made with the Lord Keeper, and the reports which (though he would be d — d ere he gave credit to any of them) had been idly circulated in the neighbourhood. It was not the Captain's cue to appear himself to be uneasy on the subject of these rumours; but he easily saw from Lady Ashton's flushed cheek, hesitating voice, and flashing eye, that she had caught the alarm which he intended to communicate. She had not heard from her husband so often or so regularly as she thought him bound in duty to have written, and of this very interesting intelligence, concerning his visit to the Tower of Wolf's Crag, and the guest, whom, with such cordiality, he had received at Ravenswood Castle, he had suffered his lady to remain altogether ignorant, until she now learned it by the chance information of a stranger. Such concealment approached, in her apprehen-

sion, to a misprision, at least, of treason, if not to actual rebellion against her matrimonial authority; and in her inward soul did she swear to take vengeance on the Lord Keeper, as on a subject detected in meditating revolt. Her indignation burned the more fiercely, as she found herself obliged to suppress it in presence of Lady Blenkinsop, the kinswoman, and of Craigen-gelt, the confidential friend of Bucklaw, of whose alliance she now became trebly desirous, since it occurred to her alarmed imagination, that her husband might, in his policy or timidity, prefer that of Ravenswood.

The Captain was engineer enough to discover that the train was fired; and therefore heard, in the course of the same day, without the least surprise, that Lady Ashton had resolved to abridge her visit to Lady Blenkinsop, and set forth with the peep of morning on her return to Scotland, using all the dispatch which the state of the roads, and the mode of travelling, would possibly permit.

Unhappy Lord Keeper! — little was he aware what a storm was travelling towards him in all the speed with which an oldfashioned coach and six could possibly achieve its journey. He, like Don Gayferos, “forgot his lady fair and true,” and was only anxious about the expected visit of the Marquis of A——. Soothfast tidings

had assured him that this nobleman was at length, and without fail, to honour his castle at one in the afternoon, being a late dinner hour; and much was the bustle in consequence of the annunciation. The Lord Keeper traversed the chambers, held consultation with the butler in the cellars, and even ventured, at the risk of a *demêlée* with a cook, of a spirit lofty enough to scorn the admonitions of Lady Ashton herself, to peep into the kitchen. Satisfied, at length, that every thing was in as active a train of preparation as was possible, he summoned Ravenswood and his daughter to walk upon the terrace, for the purpose of watching, from that commanding position, the earliest symptoms of his Lordship's approach. For this purpose, with slow and idle step, he paraded the terrace, which, flanked with a heavy stone battlement, stretched in front of the castle upon a level with the first storey; while visitors found access to the court by a projecting gate-way, the bartizan or flat-leaded roof of which was accessible from the terrace by an easy flight of low and broad steps. The whole bore a resemblance partly to a castle, partly to a nobleman's seat; and though calculated, in some respects, for defence, evinced that it had been constructed under a sense of the power and security of the ancient Lords of Ravenswood.

This pleasant walk commanded a beautiful and extensive view. But what was most to our present purpose, there were seen from the terrace two roads, one leading from the east, and one from the westward, which, crossing a ridge opposed to the eminence on which the castle stood, at different angles, gradually approached each other, until they joined not far from the gate of the avenue. It was to the westward approach that the Lord Keeper, from a sort of fidgetting anxiety, his daughter, from complaisance to him, and Ravenswood, though feeling some symptoms of internal impatience, out of complaisance to his daughter, directed their eyes to see the precursors of the Marquis's approach.

These were not long of presenting themselves. Two running footmen, dressed in white, with black jockey-caps, and long staffs in their hands, headed the train; and such was their agility, that they found no difficulty in keeping the necessary advance, which the etiquette of their station required, before the carriage and horsemen. Onwards they came at a long swinging trot, arguing unwearied speed in their long-breathed calling. Such running footmen are often alluded to in old plays, (I would particularly instance "Middleton's Mad World my Masters,") and perhaps may be still remembered by some old persons in Scotland, as part of the retinue

of the ancient nobility when travelling in full ceremony.* Behind these glancing meteors, who

* Hereupon I, Jedediah Cleishbotham, crave leave to remark, *primo*, which signifies, in the first place, that, having in vain enquired at the Circulating Library in Ganderscleugh, albeit it aboundeth in similar vanities, for this samyn Middleton and his Mad World, it was at length shewn unto me amongst other ancient fooleries carefully compiled by one Dodsley, who, doubtless, hath his reward for neglect of precious time; and having misused so much of mine as was necessary for the purpose, I therein found that a playman is brought in as a footman, whom a knight is made to greet facetiously with the epithet of „linen stocking, and three-score miles a day.”

Secundo, (which is secondly in the vernacular,) under Mr Pattieson's favour, some men not altogether so old as he would represent them, do remember this species of menial, or fore-runner. In evidence of which, I, Jedediah Cleishbotham, though mine eyes yet do me good service, remember me to have seen one of this tribe clothed in white, and bearing a staff, who ran daily

footed it as if the Avenger of Blood had been behind them, came a cloud of dust, raised by riders who preceded, attended, or followed, the state-carriage of the Marquis.

The privilege of nobility, in these days, had something in it impressive on the imagination. The dresses and liveries and number of their attendants, their style of travelling, the imposing, and almost warlike air of the armed men who surrounded them, placed them far above the laird, who travelled with his brace of footmen; and as to rivalry from the mercantile part of the community, these would as soon have thought of imitating the state equipage of the Sovereign. At present it is different; and I myself, Peter Pattieson, in a late journey to Edinburgh, had

before the state-coach of the umquhile John, Earl of Hopeton, father of this Earl, Charles, that now is; unto whom it may be justly said, that Renown playeth the part of a running footman, or precursor; and, as the poet singeth —

“Mars standing by asserts his quarrel,
And Fame flies after with a laurel.”

J. C.

the honour, in the mail-coach phrase, to «change a leg” with a peer of the realm. It was not so in the days of which I write; and the Marquis’s approach, so long expected in vain, now took place in the full pomp of ancient aristocracy. Sir William Ashton was so much interested in what he beheld, and in considering the ceremonial of reception in case any circumstance had been omitted, that he scarce heard his son Henry exclaim, «there is another coach and six coming down the east road, papa — will they both belong to the Marquis of A —?”

At length, when the youngster had fairly compelled his attention by pulling his sleeve,

«He turned his eyes, and, as he turn’d, survey’d

An awful vision.” —

Sure enough, another coach and six, with four servants or out-riders in attendance, was descending the hill from the eastward, at such a pace as made it doubtful which of the carriages thus approaching from distant quarters should first reach the gate at the extremity of the avenue. The one coach was green, the other blue; and not the green and blue chariots in the Circus of Rome or Constantinople excited more turmoil among the citizens than the double ap-

parition occasioned in the mind of the Lord Keeper. We all remember the terrible exclamation of the dying profligate, when a friend, to destroy what he supposed the hypochondriac idea of a spectre appearing in a certain shape at a given hour, placed before him a person dressed up in the manner he described. "*Mon Dieu!*" said the expiring sinner, who, it seems, saw both the real and polygraphic apparition — "*Il y en est deux!*"

The surprise of the Lord Keeper was scarcely less unpleasing at the duplication of the expected arrival; his mind misgave him strangely. There was no neighbour who would have approached so unceremoniously, at a time when ceremony was held in such respect. It must be Lady Ashton, said his conscience, and followed up the hint with an anxious anticipation of the purpose of her sudden and unannounced return. He felt that he was caught "in the manner." That the company in which she had so unluckily surprised him was likely to be highly distasteful to her, there was no question; and the only hope which remained for him was her high sense of dignified propriety, which, he trusted, might prevent a public explosion. But so active were his doubts and fears, as altogether to derange his purposed ceremonial for the reception of the Marquis.

These feelings of apprehension were not confined to Sir William Ashton. "It is my mother — it is my mother," said Lucy, turning as pale as ashes, and clasping her hands together as she looked at Ravenswood.

"And if it be Lady Ashton," said her lover to her in a low tone, "what can be the occasion of such alarm? — Surely the return of a lady to the family from which she has been so long absent, should excite other sensations than those of fear and dismay."

"You do not know my mother," said Miss Ashton, in a tone almost breathless with terror; "what will she say when she sees you in this place!"

"My stay is too long," said Ravenswood somewhat haughtily, "if her displeasure at my presence is like to be so formidable. My dear Lucy," he resumed, in a tone of soothing encouragement, "you are too childishly afraid of Lady Ashton; she is a woman of family — a lady of fashion — a person who must know the world, and what is due to her husband and her husband's guests."

Lucy shook her head; and, as if her mother, still at the distance of half a mile, could have seen and scrutinized her deportment, she withdrew herself from beside Ravenswood, and, taking her brother Henry's arm, led him to a dif-

ferent part of the terrace. The Keeper also shuffled down towards the portal of the great gate, without inviting Ravenswood to accompany him, and thus he remained standing alone on the terrace, deserted and shunned, as it were, by the inhabitants of the mansion.

This suited not the mood of one who was proud in proportion to his poverty, and who thought that, in sacrificing his deep-rooted resentments so far as to become Sir William Ashton's guest, he conferred a favour, and received none. "I can forgive Lucy," he said to himself; "she is young, timid, and conscious of an important engagement assumed without her mother's sanction; yet she should remember with whom it has been assumed, and leave me no reason to suspect that she is ashamed of her choice. For the Keeper, sense, spirit, and expression seem to have left his face and manner since he had the first glimpse of Lady Ashton's carriage. I must watch how this is to end; and, if they give me reason to think myself an unwelcome guest, my visit is soon abridged."

With these suspicions floating on his mind he left the terrace, and, walking towards the stables of the castle, gave directions that his horse should be kept in readiness, in case he should have occasion to ride abroad.

In the meanwhile the drivers of the two car-

riages, the approach of which had occasioned so much dismay at the castle, had become aware of each other's presence as they approached upon different lines to the head of the avenue, as a common centre. Lady Ashton's driver and postillions instantly received orders to get foremost, if possible, her ladyship being desirous of dispatching her first interview with her husband before the arrival of these guests, whoever they might happen to be. On the other hand, the coachman of the Marquis, conscious of his own dignity and that of his master, and observing the rival charioteer was mending his pace, resolved, like a true brother of the whip, whether ancient or modern, to vindicate his right of precedence. So that, to increase the confusion of the Lord Keeper's understanding, he saw the short time which remained for consideration abridged by the haste of the contending coachmen, who, fixing their eyes sternly on each other, and applying the lash smartly to their horses, began to thunder down the descent with emulous rapidity, while the horsemen who attended them were forced to put on to a hand gallop.

Sir William's only chance now remaining was the possibility of an overturn, and that his lady or visitor might break their necks. I am not aware that he formed any distinct wish on the

subject, but I have no reason to think that his grief in either case would have been altogether inconsolable. This chance, however, also disappeared; for Lady Ashton, though insensible to fear, began to see the ridicule of running a race with a visitor of distinction, the goal being the portal of her own castle, and commanded her coachman, as they approached the avenue, to slacken his pace, and allow precedence to the stranger's equipage, a command which he gladly obeyed, as coming in time to save his honour, the horses of the Marquis's carriage being better, or, at least, fresher than his own. He restrained his speed, therefore, and suffered the green coach to enter the avenue, with all its retinue, which pass it occupied with the speed of a whirlwind. The Marquis's laced charioteer no sooner found the *pas d'avance* was granted to him, than he resumed a more deliberate pace, at which he advanced under the embowering shade of the lofty elms, surrounded by all the attendants; while the carriage of Lady Ashton followed still more slowly at some distance.

In the front of the castle, and beneath the portal which admitted guests into the inner court, stood Sir William Ashton, much perplexed in mind, his younger son and daughter beside him, and in their rear a train of attend-

ants of various ranks, in and out of livery. The nobility and gentry of Scotland, at this period, were remarkable even to extravagance for the number of their servants, whose services were easily purchased in a country where men were numerous beyond proportion to the means of employing them.

The manners of a man, trained like Sir William Ashton, are too much at his command to remain long disconcerted with the most adverse concurrence of circumstances. He received the Marquis, as he alighted from his equipage, with the usual compliments of welcome; and, as he ushered him into the great hall, expressed his hope that his journey had been pleasant. The Marquis was a tall, well-made man, with a thoughtful and intelligent countenance, and an eye, in which the fire of ambition had for some years replaced the vivacity of youth; a bold, proud, expression of countenance, yet chastened by habitual caution, and the desire which, as the head of a party, he necessarily entertained of acquiring popularity. He answered with courtesy the courteous enquiries of the Lord Keeper, and was formally presented to Miss Ashton, in the course of which ceremony the Lord Keeper gave the first symptom of what was chiefly occupying his mind, by introducing his daughter as "his wife, Lady Ashton."

Lucy blushed; the Marquis looked surprised at the extremely juvenile appearance of his hostess, and the Lord Keeper with difficulty rallied himself so far as to explain. "I should have said my daughter, my lord; but the truth is, that I saw Lady Ashton's carriage enter the avenue shortly after your lordship's, and" —

"Make no apology, my lord," replied his noble guest; "let me entreat you will wait on your lady, and leave me to cultivate Miss Ashton's acquaintance. I am shocked my people should have taken precedence of our hostess at her own gate; but your lordship is aware, that I supposed Lady Ashton was still in the south. Permit me to beseech you will waive ceremony, and hasten to welcome her."

This was precisely what the Lord Keeper longed to do; and he instantly profited by his lordship's obliging permission. To see Lady Ashton, and encounter the first burst of her displeasure in private, might prepare her, in some degree, to receive her unwelcome guests with due decorum. As her carriage, therefore, stopped, the arm of the attentive husband was ready to assist Lady Ashton in dismounting. Looking as if she saw him not, she put his arm aside, and requested that of Captain Craigengelt, who stood by the coach with his laced hat under his arm, having acted as *cavaliere serviente*, or squire

in attendance, during the journey. Taking hold of this respectable person's arm as if to support her, Lady Ashton traversed the court, uttering a word or two by way of direction to the servants, but not one to Sir William, who in vain endeavoured to attract her attention, as he rather followed than accompanied her into the hall, in which they found the Marquis in close conversation with the Master of Ravenswood: Lucy had taken the first opportunity of escaping. There was embarrassment on every countenance except that of the Marquis of A — —, for even Craigengelt's impudence was hardly able to veil his fear of Ravenswood, and the rest felt the awkwardness of the position in which they were thus unexpectedly placed.

After waiting a moment to be presented by Sir William Ashton, the Marquis resolved to introduce himself. "The Lord Keeper," he said, bowing to Lady Ashton, "has just introduced to me his daughter as his wife — he might very easily present Lady Ashton as his daughter, so little does she differ from what I remember her some years since — Will she permit an old acquaintance the privilege of a guest?"

He saluted the lady with too good a grace to apprehend a repulse, and then proceeded — "This, Lady Ashton, is a peace-making visit, and therefore I presume to introduce my cousin,

the young Master of Ravenswood, to your favourable notice."

Lady Ashton could not chuse but courtesy; but there was in her obeisance an air of haughtiness approaching to contemptuous repulse. Ravenswood could not chuse but bow; but his manner returned the scorn with which he had been greeted.

"Allow me," she said, "to present to your lordship *my* friend." Craigengelt, with the forward impudence which men of his cast mistake for ease, made a sliding bow to the Marquis, which he graced by a flourish of his gold-laced hat. The lady turned to her husband — "You and I, Sir William," she said, and these were the first words she had addressed to him, "have acquired new acquaintances since we parted — let me introduce the acquisition I have made to mine — Captain Craigengelt."

Another bow, and another flourish of the gold-laced hat, which was returned by the Lord Keeper without intimation of former recognition, and with that sort of anxious readiness, which intimated his wish, that peace and amnesty should take place betwixt the contending parties, including the auxiliaries on both sides. "Let me introduce you to the Master of Ravenswood," said he to Captain Craigengelt, following up the same amicable system. But the Master drew up

his tall form to the full extent of his height, and without so much as looking towards the person thus introduced to him, he said, in a marked tone, "Captain Craigengelt and I are already perfectly well acquainted with each other."

"Perfectly — perfectly," replied the Captain, in a mumbling tone, like that of a double echo, and with a flourish of his hat, the circumference of which was greatly abridged, compared with those which had so cordially graced his introduction to the Marquis and the Lord Keeper.

Lockhard, followed by three menials, now entered with wine and refreshments, which it was the fashion to offer as a whet before dinner; and when they were placed before the guests, Lady Ashton made an apology for withdrawing her husband from them for some minutes upon business of special import. The Marquis, of course, requested her ladyship would lay herself under no restraint; and Craigengelt, bolting with speed a second glass of racy canary, hastened to leave the room, feeling no great pleasure in the prospect of being left alone with the Marquis of A — and the Master of Ravenswood; the presence of the former holding him in awe, and that of the latter in bodily terror.

Some arrangements about his horse and baggage formed the pretext for his sudden retreat,

in which he persevered, although Lady Ashton gave Lockhard orders to be careful most particularly to accommodate Captain Craigengelt with all the attendance which he could possibly require. The Marquis and the Master of Ravenswood were thus left to communicate to each other their remarks upon the reception which they had met with, while Lady Ashton led the way, and her lord followed somewhat like a condemned criminal, to her ladyship's dressing-room.

So soon as the spouses had both entered, her ladyship gave way to that fierce audacity of temper, which she had with difficulty suppressed, out of respect to appearances. She shut the door behind the alarmed Lord Keeper, took the key out of the springlock, and with a countenance which years had not bereft of its haughty charms, and eyes which spoke at once resolution and resentment, she addressed her astounded husband in these words: — "My lord, I am not greatly surprised at the connections you have been pleased to form during my absence — they are entirely in conformity with your birth and breeding; and if I did expect any thing else, I heartily own my error, and that I merit, by having done so, the disappointment you had prepared for me."

"My dear Lady Ashton — my dear Eleanor,"

in attendance, during the journey. Taking hold of this respectable person's arm as if to support her, Lady Ashton traversed the court, uttering a word or two by way of direction to the servants, but not one to Sir William, who in vain endeavoured to attract her attention, as he rather followed than accompanied her into the hall, in which they found the Marquis in close conversation with the Master of Ravenswood: Lucy had taken the first opportunity of escaping. There was embarrassment on every countenance except that of the Marquis of A — —, for even Craigengelt's impudence was hardly able to veil his fear of Ravenswood, and the rest felt the awkwardness of the position in which they were thus unexpectedly placed.

After waiting a moment to be presented by Sir William Ashton, the Marquis resolved to introduce himself. "The Lord Keeper," he said, bowing to Lady Ashton, "has just introduced to me his daughter as his wife — he might very easily present Lady Ashton as his daughter, so little does she differ from what I remember her some years since — Will she permit an old acquaintance the privilege of a guest?"

He saluted the lady with too good a grace to apprehend a repulse, and then proceeded — "This, Lady Ashton, is a peace-making visit, and therefore I presume to introduce my cousin,

the young Master of Ravenswood, to your favourable notice."

Lady Ashton could not chuse but courtesy; but there was in her obeisance an air of haughtiness approaching to contemptuous repulse. Ravenswood could not chuse but bow; but his manner returned the scorn with which he had been greeted.

"Allow me," she said, "to present to your lordship *my* friend." Craigengelt, with the forward impudence which men of his cast mistake for ease, made a sliding bow to the Marquis, which he graced by a flourish of his gold-laced hat. The lady turned to her husband — "You and I, Sir William," she said, and these were the first words she had addressed to him, "have acquired new acquaintances since we parted — let me introduce the acquisition I have made to mine — Captain Craigengelt."

Another bow, and another flourish of the gold-laced hat, which was returned by the Lord Keeper without intimation of former recognition, and with that sort of anxious readiness, which intimated his wish, that peace and amnesty should take place betwixt the contending parties, including the auxiliaries on both sides. "Let me introduce you to the Master of Ravenswood," said he to Captain Craigengelt, following up the same amicable system. But the Master drew up

his tall form to the full extent of his height, and without so much as looking towards the person thus introduced to him, he said, in a marked tone, "Captain Craigengelt and I are already perfectly well acquainted with each other."

"Perfectly — perfectly," replied the Captain, in a mumbling tone, like that of a double echo, and with a flourish of his hat, the circumference of which was greatly abridged, compared with those which had so cordially graced his introduction to the Marquis and the Lord Keeper.

Lockhard, followed by three menials, now entered with wine and refreshments, which it was the fashion to offer as a whet before dinner; and when they were placed before the guests, Lady Ashton made an apology for withdrawing her husband from them for some minutes upon business of special import. The Marquis, of course, requested her ladyship would lay herself under no restraint; and Craigengelt, bolting with speed a second glass of racy canary, hastened to leave the room, feeling no great pleasure in the prospect of being left alone with the Marquis of A — and the Master of Ravenswood; the presence of the former holding him in awe, and that of the latter in bodily terror.

Some arrangements about his horse and baggage formed the pretext for his sudden retreat,

in which he persevered, although Lady Ashton gave Lockhard orders to be careful most particularly to accommodate Captain Craigengelt with all the attendance which he could possibly require. The Marquis and the Master of Ravenswood were thus left to communicate to each other their remarks upon the reception which they had met with, while Lady Ashton led the way, and her lord followed somewhat like a condemned criminal, to her ladyship's dressing-room.

So soon as the spouses had both entered, her ladyship gave way to that fierce audacity of temper, which she had with difficulty suppressed, out of respect to appearances. She shut the door behind the alarmed Lord Keeper, took the key out of the springlock, and with a countenance which years had not bereft of its haughty charms, and eyes which spoke at once resolution and resentment, she addressed her astounded husband in these words: — “My lord, I am not greatly surprised at the connections you have been pleased to form during my absence — they are entirely in conformity with your birth and breeding; and if I did expect any thing else, I heartily own my error, and that I merit, by having done so, the disappointment you had prepared for me.”

“My dear Lady Ashton — my dear Eleanor,”

said the Lord Keeper, «listen to reason for a moment, and I will convince you I have acted with all the regard due to the dignity, as well as the interest of my family.”

«To the interest of *your* family I conceive you perfectly capable of attending,” returned the indignant lady, «and even to the dignity of your family also — But as mine happens to be inextricably involved with it, you will excuse me if I chuse to give my own attention so far as that is concerned.”

„What would you have, Lady Ashton?” said the husband — «What is it that displeases you? Why is it, that on your return after so long an absence, I am arraigned in this manner?”

«Ask your own conscience, Sir William, what has prompted you to become a renegade to your political party and opinions, and led you, for what I know, to be on the point of marrying your only daughter to a beggarly jacobite bankrupt, the inveterate enemy of your family to the boot.”

«Why, what, in the name of common sense and common civility, would you have me do, madam?” answered her husband — «Is it possible for me, with ordinary decency, to turn a young gentleman out of my house, who saved my daughter’s life and my own, but the other morning as it were?”

“Saved your life! I have heard of that story,” said the lady — “the Lord Keeper was scared by a dun cow, and he takes the young fellow who killed her for Guy of Warwick — any butcher from Haddington may soon have an equal claim on your hospitality.”

“Lady Ashton,” stammered the Keeper, “this is intolerable — and when I am desirous, too, to make you easy by any sacrifice — if you would but tell me what you would be at.”

“Go down to your guests,” said the imperious dame, “and make your apology to Ravenswood, that the arrival of Captain Craigengelt and some other friends, renders it impossible for you to offer him lodgings at the castle — I expect young Mr Hayston of Bucklaw.”

“Good Heavens, madam!” ejaculated her husband — “Ravenswood to give place to Craigengelt, a common gambler and an informer! — it was all I could do to forbear desiring the fellow to get out of my house, and I was much surprised to see him in your ladyship’s train.”

“Since you saw him there, you might be well assured,” answered this meek helpmate, “that he was proper society. As to this Ravenswood, he only meets with the treatment which, to my certain knowledge, he gave to a much valued friend of mine, who had the misfortune to be his guest some time since. But take your re-

solution; for, if Ravenswood does not quit the house, I will."

Sir William Ashton paced up and down the apartment in the most distressing agitation, fear, and shame, and anger contending against the habitual deference he was in the use of rendering to his lady. At length it ended, as is usual with timid minds placed in such circumstances, in his adopting a *mezzo termine*, a middle measure.

"I tell you frankly, madam, I neither can nor will be guilty of the incivility you propose to the Master of Ravenswood — he has not deserved it at my hand. If you will be so unreasonable as to insult a man of quality under your own roof, I cannot prevent you, but I will not at least be the agent in such a preposterous proceeding."

"You will not?" asked the lady.

"No, by Heavens, madam," her husband replied; "ask me anything congruent with common decency, as to drop his acquaintance by degrees, or the like — but to bid him leave my house, is what I will not, and cannot consent to."

"Then the task of supporting the honour of the family will fall on me, as it has often done before," said the lady.

She sat down, and hastily wrote a few lines. The Lord Keeper made another effort to prevent

her taking a step to decisive, just as she opened the door to call her female attendant from the anti-room. "Think what you are doing, Lady Ashton — you are making a mortal enemy of a young man, who is like to have the means of harming us" — —

"Did you ever know a Douglas who feared an enemy?" answered the lady contemptuously.

"Ay, but he is as proud and vindictive as an hundred Douglasses, and an hundred devils to boot. Think of it for a night only."

"Not for another moment," answered the lady; — "here, Mrs Patullo, give this billet to young Ravenswood."

"To the Master, madam?" said Mrs Patullo.

"Ay, to the Master, if you call him so."

"I wash my hands of it entirely," said the Keeper; "and I shall go down into the garden, and see that Jardine gathers the winter fruit for the dessert."

"Do so," said the lady, looking after him with looks of infinite contempt; "and thank God that you leave one behind you as fit to protect the honour of the family, as you are to look after pippins and pears."

The Lord Keeper remained long enough in the garden to give her ladyship's mine time to explode, and to let, as he thought, at least the first violence of Ravenswood's displeasure blow

over. When he entered the hall, he found the Marquis of A — giving orders to some of his attendants. He seemed in high displeasure, and interrupted an apology which Sir William had commenced, for having left his lordship alone.

“I presume, Sir William, you are no stranger to this singular billet with which my kinsman of Ravenswood (an emphasis on the word *my*) has been favoured by your lady — and, of course, that you are prepared to receive my adieus — My kinsman is already gone, having thought it unnecessary to offer any on his part, since all former civilities have been cancelled by this singular insult.”

“I protest, my lord,” said Sir William, holding the billet in his hand, “I am not privy to the contents of this letter. I know Lady Ashton is a warm-tempered and prejudiced woman, and I am sincerely sorry for any offence that has been given or taken; but I hope your lordship will consider that a lady” —

“Should bear herself towards persons of a certain rank with the breeding of one,” said the Marquis, completing the half-uttered sentence.

“True, my lord,” said the unfortunate Keeper; “but Lady Ashton is still a woman” —

“And as such, methinks,” said the Marquis, again interrupting him, “should be taught the duties which correspond to her station. But

here she comes, and I will learn from her own mouth the reason of this extraordinary and unexpected affront offered to my near relation, while both he and I were her ladyship's guests."

Lady Ashton accordingly entered the apartment at this moment. Her dispute with Sir William, and a subsequent interview with her daughter, had not prevented her from attending to the duties of her toilette. She appeared in full dress; and, from the character of her countenance and manner, well became the splendour with which ladies of quality then appeared on such occasions.

The Marquis of A — — bowed haughtily, and she returned the salute with equal pride and distance of demeanour. He then took from the passive hand of Sir William Ashton the billet he had given him the moment before he approached the lady, and was about to speak, when she interrupted him. "I perceive, my lord, you are about to enter upon an unpleasant subject. I am sorry any such should have occurred at this time, to interrupt, in the slightest degree, the respectful reception due to your lordship — but so it is. — Mr Edgar Ravenswood, for whom I have addressed the billet in your lordship's hand, has abused the hospitality of this family, and Sir William Ashton's softness of temper, in order to seduce a young person into engagements

without her parents' consent, and of which they never can approve."

Both gentlemen answered at once, — "My kinsman is incapable" — said the Lord Marquis.

"I am confident that my daughter Lucy is still more incapable" — said the Lord Keeper.

Lady Ashton at once interrupted, and replied to them both, — "My Lord Marquis, your kinsman, if Mr Ravenswood has the honour to be so, has made this attempt privately to secure the affections of this young and inexperienced girl. — Sir William Ashton, your daughter has been simple enough to give more encouragement than she ought to have done to so very improper a suitor."

"And I think, madam," said the Lord Keeper, losing his accustomed temper and patience, "that if you had nothing better to tell us, you had better have kept this family secret to yourself also."

"You will pardon me, Sir William," said the lady, calmly; "the noble Marquis has a right to know the cause of the treatment I have found it necessary to use to a gentleman whom he calls his blood-relation."

"It is a cause," muttered the Lord Keeper, "which has emerged since the effect has taken place; for, if it exists at all, I am sure she

knew nothing of it when her letter to Ravenswood was written."

"It is the first time that I have heard of this," said the Marquis; "but since your ladyship has tabled a subject so delicate, permit me to say, that my kinsman's birth and connections entitled him to a patient hearing, and, at least, a civil refusal, even in case of his being so ambitious as to raise his eyes to the daughter of Sir William Ashton."

"You will recollect, my lord, of what blood Miss Lucy Ashton is come by the mother's side," said the lady.

"I do remember your descent — from a younger branch of the house of Angus," said the Marquis — "and your ladyship — forgive me, lady — ought not to forget that the Ravenswoods have thrice intermarried with the main branch. Come, madam — I know how matters stand — old and long-fostered prejudices are difficult to get over — I make every allowance for them — I ought not, and I would not have suffered my kinsman to depart alone, expelled, in a manner, from this house — but I had hopes of being a mediator. I am still unwilling to leave you in anger — and shall not set forward till after noon, as I rejoin the Master of Ravenswood upon the road a few miles from hence. Let us talk over this matter more coolly."

“It is what I anxiously desire, my lord,” said Sir William Ashton, eagerly. “Lady Ashton, we will not permit my Lord of A — to leave us in displeasure. We must compel him to tarry dinner at the castle.”

“The castle,” said the lady, “and all that it contains, are at the command of the Marquis, so long as he chuses to honour it with his residence — but touching the farther discussion of this disagreeable topic” —

“Pardon me, good madam,” said the Marquis; “but I cannot allow you to express any hasty resolution on a subject so important. I see that more company is arriving; and since I have the good fortune to renew my former acquaintance with Lady Ashton, I hope she will give me leave to avoid perilling what I prize so highly upon any disagreeable subject of discussion — at least, till we have talked over more agreeable topics.”

The lady smiled, courtesied, and gave her hand to the Marquis, by whom, with all the formal gallantry of the time, which did not permit the guest to tuck the lady of the house under the arm, as a rustic does his sweetheart at a wake, she was ushered to the eating-room.

Here they were joined by Bucklaw, Craigen-gelt, and other neighbours, whom the Lord Keeper had previously invited to meet the Marquis of

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CHAPTER XXIII.

*Such was our fallen father's fate,
Yet better than mine own;
He shared his exile with his mate,
I'm banished forth alone.*

Waller.

I WILL not attempt to describe the mixture of indignation and regret with which Ravenswood left the seat which had belonged to his ancestors. The terms in which Lady Ashton's billet was couched rendered it impossible for him, without being deficient in that spirit of which he perhaps had too much, to remain an instant longer within its walls. The Marquis, who had his share in the affront, was, nevertheless, still willing to make some efforts at conciliation. He therefore suffered his kinsman to depart alone, making him promise, however, that he would wait for him at the small inn called the Tod's-hole,

situated, as our readers may be pleased to recollect, half way betwixt Ravenswood Castle and Wolf's Crag, and about five Scottish miles distant from each. Here the Marquis proposed to join the Master of Ravenswood, either that night or the next morning. His own feelings would have induced him to have left the castle directly, but he was loth to forfeit, without at least one effort, the advantages which he had proposed from his visit to the Lord Keeper; and the Master of Ravenswood was, even in the very heat of his resentment, unwilling to foreclose any chance of reconciliation which might arise out of the partiality which Sir William Ashton had shewn towards him, as well as the intercessory arguments of his noble kinsman. He himself departed without a moment's delay, farther than was necessary to make this arrangement.

At first he spurred his horse at a quick pace through an avenue of the park, as if, by rapidity of motion, he could stupify the confusion of feelings with which he was assailed. But as the road grew wilder and more sequestered, and when the trees had hidden the turrets of the castle, he gradually slackened his pace, as if to indulge the painful reflections which he had in vain endeavoured to repress. The path in which he found himself led him to the Mermaid's Fountain, and to the cottage of Alice; and the

fatal influence which superstitious belief attached to the former spot, as well as the admonitions which had been in vain offered to him by the inhabitant of the latter, forced themselves upon his memory. "Old saws speak truth," he said to himself; "and the Mermaid's Well has indeed witnessed the last act of rashness of the heir of Ravenswood. — Alice spoke well," he continued, "and I am in the situation which she foretold — or rather I am more deeply dishonoured — not the dependent and ally of the destroyer of my father's house, as the old sybil presaged, but the degraded wretch, who has aspired to hold that subordinate character, and has been rejected with disdain."

We are bound to tell the tale as we have received it; and, considering the distance of the time, and propensity of those through whose mouths it has passed to the marvellous, this could not be called a Scottish story, unless it manifested a tinge of Scottish superstition. As Ravenswood approached the solitary fountain, he is said to have met with the following singular adventure: — His horse, which was moving slowly forward, suddenly interrupted its steady and composed pace, snorted, reared, and, though urged by the spur, refused to proceed, as if some object of terror had suddenly presented itself. On looking to the fountain, Ravenswood dis-

cerned a female figure, dressed in a white, or rather greyish mantle, placed on the very spot on which Lucy Ashton had reclined while listening to the fatal tale of love. His immediate impression was, that she had conjectured by which path he would traverse the park on his departure, and placed herself at this wellknown and sequestered place of rendez-vous, to indulge her own sorrow and his in a parting interview. In this belief he jumped from his horse, and, making its bridle fast to a tree, walked hastily towards the fountain, pronouncing eagerly, yet under his breath, the words, „Miss Ashton! — Lucy!”

The figure turned as he addressed it, and displayed to his wondering eyes the features, not of Lucy Ashton, but of old blind Alice. The singularity of her dress, which rather resembled a shroud than the garment of a living woman — the appearance of her person, larger, as it struck him, than it usually seemed to be — above all, the strange circumstance of a blind, infirm, and decrepit person being found at a distance from her habitation, (considerable if her infirmities be taken into account,) combined to impress him with a feeling of wonder approaching to fear. As he approached, she arose from her seat, held her shrivelled hand up as if to prevent his coming more near, and her withered

lips moved fast, although no sound issued from them. Ravenswood stopped; and as, after a moment's pause, he again advanced towards her, Alice, or her apparition, moved or glided backwards towards the thicket, still keeping her face turned towards him. The trees soon hid the form from his sight; and, yielding to the strong and terrific impression that the being which he had seen was not of this world, the Master of Ravenswood remained rooted to the ground whereon he had stood when he caught his last view of her. At length, summoning up his courage, he advanced to the spot on which the figure had seemed to be seated; but neither was there pressure of the grass, nor any other circumstance, to induce him to believe that what he had seen was real and substantial.

Full of those strange thoughts and confused apprehensions which awake in the bosom of one who conceives he has witnessed some preternatural appearance, the Master of Ravenswood walked back towards his horse, frequently however looking behind him, not without apprehension, as if expecting that the vision would reappear. But the apparition, whether it was real, or whether it was the creation of a heated and agitated imagination, returned not again; and he found his horse sweating and terrified, as if experiencing that agony of fear, with which the presence

of a supernatural being is supposed to agitate the brute creation. The Master mounted, and rode slowly forward, soothing his horse from time to time, while the animal seemed internally to shrink and shudder, as if expecting some new object of fear at the opening of every glade. The rider, after a moment's consideration, resolved to investigate the matter further. "Can my eyes have deceived me," he said, "and deceived me for such a space of time? — Or are this woman's infirmities but feigned, in order to excite compassion? — And even then, her motion resembled not that of a living and existing person. Must I adopt the popular creed, and think that the unhappy being has formed a league with the powers of darkness? — I am determined to be resolved — I will not brook imposition even from my own eyes."

In this uncertainty he rode up to the little wicket of Alice's garden. Her seat beneath the birch - tree was vacant, though the day was pleasant, and the sun was high. He approached the hut, and heard from within the sobs and wailing of a female. No answer was returned when he knocked, so that, after a moment's pause, he lifted the latch and entered. It was indeed a house of solitude and sorrow. Stretched upon her miserable pallet lay the corpse of the last retainer of the house of Ravenswood,

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who still abode on their paternal domains. Life had but shortly departed; and the little girl by whom she had been attended in her last moments was wringing her hands and sobbing, betwixt childish fear and sorrow, over the body of her mistress.

The Master of Ravenswood had some difficulty to compose the terrors of the poor child, whom his unexpected appearance had at first rather appalled than comforted; and when he succeeded, the first expression which the girl used intimated that "he had come too late." Upon enquiring the meaning of this expression, he learned that the deceased, upon the first attack of the mortal agony, had sent a peasant to the castle to beseech an interview of the Master of Ravenswood, and had expressed the utmost impatience for his return. But the messengers of the poor are tardy and negligent: the fellow had not reached the castle, as was afterwards learned, until Ravenswood had left it, and had then found too much amusement among the retinue of the strangers to return in any haste to the cottage of Alice. Meantime her anxiety of mind seemed to increase with the agony of her body; and, to use the phrase of Babie, her only attendant, "she prayed powerfully that she might see her master's son once more, and renew her warning." She died just as the clock in the dis-

tant village tolled one; and Ravenswood remembered, with internal shuddering, that he had heard the chime sound through the wood just before he had seen what he was now much disposed to consider as the spectre of the deceased.

It was necessary, as well from his respect to the departed as in common humanity to her terrified attendant, that he should take some measures to relieve the girl from her distressing situation. The deceased, he understood, had expressed a desire to be buried in a solitary churchyard near the little inn of the Tod's-hole, called the Hermitage, or more commonly Armitage, in which lay interred some of the Ravenswood family, and many of their followers. Ravenswood conceived it his duty to gratify this predilection, so commonly found to exist among the Scottish peasantry, and dispatched Babie to the neighbouring village to procure the assistance of some females, assuring her that, in the meanwhile, he would himself remain with the dead body, which, as in Thessaly of old, it is accounted highly unfit to leave without a watch.

Thus, in the course of a quarter of an hour, or little more, he found himself sitting, a solitary guard over the inanimate corse of her, whose dismissed spirit, unless his eyes had strangely deceived him, had so shortly before manifested itself before him. Notwithstanding his

natural courage, the Master was considerably affected by a concurrence of circumstances so extraordinary. "She died expressing her eager desire to see me. Can it be, then," — was his natural course of reflection — "can strong and earnest wishes, formed during the last agony of nature, survive its catastrophe, surmount the awful bounds of the spiritual world, and place before us its inhabitants in the hues and colouring of life? — And why was that manifested to the eye which could not unfold its tale to the ear? — and wherefore should a breach be made in the laws of nature, yet its purpose remain unknown? — Vain questions, which only death, when it shall make me like the pale and withered form before me, can ever resolve."

He laid a cloth, as he spoke, over the lifeless face, upon whose features he felt unwilling any longer to dwell. He then took his place in an old carved oaken chair, ornamented with his own armorial bearings, which Alice had contrived to appropriate to her own use in the pillage which took place among creditors, officers, domestics, and messengers of the law, when his father left Ravenswood Castle for the last time. Thus seated, he banished, as much as he could, the superstitious feelings which the late incident naturally inspired. His own were sad enough, without the exaggerations of supernatural terror,

since he found himself transferred from the situation of a successful lover of Lucy Ashton, and an honoured and respected friend of her father, into the melancholy and solitary guardian of the abandoned and forsaken corpse of a common pauper.

He was relieved, however, from his sad office sooner than he could reasonably have expected, from the distance betwixt the hut of the deceased and the village, and the age and infirmities of three old women, who came from thence, in military phrase, to relieve guard upon the body of the defunct. On any other occasion the speed of these reverend sybils would have been much more moderate, for the first was eighty years of age and upwards, the second was paralytic, and the third lame of a leg from some accident. But the burial duties rendered to the deceased, are, to the Scottish peasant of either sex, a labour of love. I know not whether it is from the temper of the people, grave and enthusiastic as it certainly is, or from the recollection of the ancient catholic opinions, when the funeral rites were always considered as a period of festival to the living; but feasting, good cheer, and even inebriety, were, and are, the frequent accompaniments of a Scottish old-fashioned burial. What the funeral feast, or *dirgie*, as it is called, was to the men, the

gloomy preparations of the dead body for the coffin were to the women. To straight the contorted limbs upon a board used for that melancholy purpose, to array the corpse in clean linen, and over that in its woollen shroud, were operations committed always to the old matrons of the village, and in which they found a singular and gloomy delight.

The old women paid the Master their salutations with a ghastly smile, which reminded him of the meeting betwixt Macbeth and the witches on the blasted heath of Forres. He gave them some money, and recommended to them the charge of the dead body of their contemporary, an office which they willingly undertook; intimating to him at the same time that he must leave the hut, in order that they might begin their mournful duties. Ravenswood readily agreed to depart, only tarrying to recommend to them due attention to the body, and to receive information where he was to find the sexton, or beadle, who had in charge the deserted church-yard of the Armitage, in order to prepare matters for the reception of old Alice in the place of repose which she had selected for herself.

"Ye'll no be pinched to find out Johnie Mort-heugh," said the elder sybil, and still her withered cheek bore a grisly smile — "he dwells

near the Tod's-hole, an house of entertainment where there has been mony a blithe birling — for death and drinkdraining are near neighbours to ane anither."

"Ay! and that's e'en true, cummer," said the lame hag, propping herself with a crutch which supported the shortness of her left leg, "for I mind when the father of this Master of Ravenswood that is now standing before us, sticked young Blackhall with his whinger, for a wrang word said ower their wine, or brandy, or what not — he gaed in as light as a lark, and he came out with his feet foremost. I was at the winding of the corpse; and when the bluid was washed off, he was a bonnie bouk of man's body."

It may be easily believed that this illtimed anecdote hastened the Master's purpose of quitting a company so evil-omened and so odious. Yet, while walking to the tree to which his horse was tied, and busying himself with adjusting the girths of the saddle, he could not avoid hearing, through the hedge of the little garden, a conversation respecting himself, betwixt the lame woman and the octogenarian sybil. The pair had hobbled into the garden to gather rosemary, southern-wood, rue, and other plants proper to be strewed upon the body, and burned by way of fumigation in the chimney of the cottage.

The paralytic wretch, almost exhausted by the journey, was left guard upon the corpse, lest witches or fiends might play their sport with it.

The following low croaking dialogue was necessarily overheard by the Master of Ravenswood: — “That’s a fresh and fullgrown hemlock, Annie Winnie — mony a cummer lang syne wad he sought nae better horse to flee over hill and how, through mist and moonlight, and light doun in the King of France’s cellar.”

“Ay, cummer! but the very de’il has turned as hard-hearted now as the Lord Keeper, and the grit folk that hae breasts like whin-stane. They prick us and they pine us, and they pit us on the pinny-winkles for witches; and, if I say my prayers backwards ten times ower, Satan will never gi’e me amends o’ them.”

“Did ye ever see the foul thief?” asked her neighbour.

“Na!” replied the other spokeswoman; “but I trow I hae dreamed of him mony a time, and I think the day will come they will burn me for’t. But ne’er mind, cummer! we hae this dollar of the Master’s, and we’ll send doun for bread and for aill, and tobacco, and a drap brandy to burn, and a wee pickle saft sugar — and be there de’il, or nae de’il, lass, we’ll hae a merry night o’t.”

Here her leathern chops uttered a sort of

cackling ghastly laugh, resembling, to a certain degree, the cry of the screech-owl.

“He is a frank man, and a free-handed man, the Master,” said Annie Winnie, „and a comely personage — broad in the shouthers, and narrow around the lungies — he wad mak a bonnie corpse — I wad like to hae the streaking and winding o’ him.”

“It is written on his brow, Annie Winnie,” returned the octogenarian, her companion, „that hand of woman, or of man either, will never straught him — dead-deal will never be laid to his back — make you your market of that, for I hae it frae a sure hand.”

“Will it be his lot to die on the battleground then, Ailsie Gourlay? — Will he die by the sword or the ball, as his forbears hae dune before him mony ane o’ them?”

“Ask nae mair questions about it — he’ll no be graced sae far,” replied the sage.

“I ken ye are wiser than ither folk, Ailsie Gourlay — But wha tell’d ye this?”

“Fashna your thumb about that, Annie Winnie,” answered the sybil — “I hae it frae a hand sure aneugh.”

„But ye said ye never saw the foul thief,” reiterated her inquisitive companion.

“I hae it frae as sure a hand,” said Ailsie,

“and from them that spaed his fortune before the sark gaed ower his head.”

“Hark! I hear his horse’s feet riding off,” said the other; “they dinna sound as if good luck was wi’ them.”

“Mak haste, sirs,” cried the paralytic hag from the cottage, “and let us do what is needfu’, and say what is fitting; for, if the dead corpse binna straughted, it will girn and thraw, and that will fear the best of us.”

Ravenswood was now out of hearing. He despised most of the ordinary prejudices about witchcraft, omens, and vaticination, to which his age and country still gave such implicit credit, that, to express a doubt of them, was accounted a crime equal to the unbelief of Jews or Saracens; he knew also that the prevailing belief concerning witches, operating upon the hypochondriac habits of those whom age, infirmity, and poverty rendered liable to suspicion, and enforced by the fear of death, and the pangs of the most cruel tortures, often extorted those confessions which encumber and disgrace the criminal records of Scotland during the seventeenth century. But the vision of that morning, whether real or imaginary, had impressed his mind with a superstitious feeling which he in vain endeavoured to shake off. The nature of the business which awaited him at the little inn,

called Tod's-hole, where he soon after arrived, was not of a kind to restore his spirits.

It was necessary he should see Mortsheugh, the sexton of the old burial-ground at Armitage, to arrange matters for the funeral of Alice; and as the man dwelt near the place of her late residence, the Master, after a slight refreshment, walked towards the place where the body of Alice was to be deposited. It was situated in the nook formed by the eddying sweep of a stream, which issued from the adjoining hills. A rude cavern in an adjacent rock, which, in the interior, was cut into the shape of a cross, formed the hermitage, where some Saxon saint had in ancient times done penance, and given name to the place. The rich Abbey of Coldinghame had, in latter days, established a chapel in the neighbourhood, of which no vestige was now visible, though the church-yard which surrounded it, was still, as upon the present occasion, used for the interment of particular persons. One or two shattered yew-trees still grew within the precincts of that which had once been holy ground. Warriors and barons had been buried there of old, but their names were forgotten, and their monuments demolished. The only sepulchral memorials which remained, were the upright head-stones which mark the grave of persons of an inferior rank. The abode of

the sexton was a solitary cottage adjacent to the ruined wall of the cemetery, but so low, and having its thatch, which nearly reached the ground, covered with such a crop of grass, fog, and house leeks, that it resembled an overgrown grave. On enquiry, however, Ravenswood found that the man of the last mattock was absent at a bridal, being fiddler as well as grave-digger to the vicinity. He therefore retired to the little inn, leaving a message that early next morning he would again call for the person, whose double occupation connected him at once with the house of mourning and the house of feasting.

An outrider of the Marquis arrived at Tod's-hole shortly after, with a message intimating that his master would join Ravenswood at that place on the following morning; and the Master, who would otherwise have proceeded to his old retreat at Wolf's Crag, remained there accordingly, to give the meeting to his noble kinsman.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Hamlet. Has this fellow no feeling of his business — he sings at grave making.

Horatio. Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

Hamlet. 'Tis e'en so, the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

Shakespeare.

THE sleep of Ravenswood was broken by ghastly and agitating visions, and his waking intervals disturbed by melancholy reflections on the past, and painful anticipations of the future. He was perhaps the only traveller who ever slept in that miserable kennel without complaining of his lodgings, or feeling inconveniences from their deficiencies. It is when "the mind is free the body's delicate." Morning, however, found the Master an early riser, in hopes that the fresh air of the dawn might afford the refreshment

which night had refused him. He took his way towards the solitary burial-ground, which lay about half a mile from the inn.

The thin blue smoke, which already began to curl upward, and to distinguish the cottage of the living from the habitation of the dead, apprized him that its inmate had returned and was stirring. Accordingly, on entering the little church-yard, he saw the old man labouring in a half-made grave. My destiny, thought Ravenswood, seems to lead me to scenes of fate and of death; but these are childish thoughts, and they shall not master me. I will not again suffer my imagination to beguile my senses. — The old man rested on his spade as the Master approached him, as if to receive his commands, and as he did not immediately speak, the sexton opened the discourse in his own way.

“Ye will be a wedding customer, sir, I’s warrant.”

„What makes you think so, friend?” replied the Master.

“I live by twa trades, sir,” replied the blythe old man; “fiddle, sir, and spade; filling the world, and emptying of it; and I suld ken baith east of customers by head-mark in thirty years practice.”

“You are mistaken, however, this morning,” replied Ravenswood.

“Am I?” said the old man, looking keenly at him, “troth and it may be; since, for as brent as your brow is, there is something sitting upon it this day, that is as near akin to death as to wedlock. Weel, weel, the pick and shovel are as ready to your order as bow and fiddle.”

“I wish you,” said Ravenswood, “to look after the decent interment of an old woman, Alice Gray, who lived at the Craigfoot in Ravenswood Park.”

“Alice Gray! blind Alice!” said the sexton; “and is she gane at last? that’s another jow of the bell to bid me be ready.. I mind when Habbie Gray brought her down to this land; a likely lass she was then, and looked ower her southland nose at us a’. I trow her pride got a downcome. And is she e’en gane?”

“She died yesterday,” said Ravenswood; “and desired to be buried here, beside her husband; you will know where he lies, no doubt.”

“Ken where he lies?” answered the sexton, with national indirection of response, “I ken where a’ body lies, that lies here. But ye were speaking o’ her grave? — Lord help us — it’s no an ordinar grave that will haud her in, if a’s true that folks said of Alice in her auld days; and if I gae to six feet deep, and a warlock’s grave shouldna be an inch mair ebb, or her ain.

witch cummers would soon whirl her out of her shroud for a' their auld acquaintance — and be't six feet, or be't three, wha's to pay the making o't, I pray ye?"

"I will pay that, my friend, and all other reasonable charges."

"Reasonable charges?" said the sexton; "ou, there's ground-mail, and bell-siller, (though the bell's broken nae doubt) and the kist, and my day's wark, and my bit fee, and some brandy and aill to the drigie — I am no thinking that you can inter her, to ca' decently, under saxteen pund Scots."

"There is the money, my friend," said Ravenswood, "and something over. Be sure you know the grave."

"Ye'll be ane o' her English relations, I see warrant," said the hoary man of skulls; "I hae heard she married far below her station; it was very right to let her bite on the bridle when she was living, and its very right to gie her a decent burial now she's dead, for that's a matter o' credit to yoursell rather than to her. Folk may let their kindred shift for themsells when they are alive, and can bear the burthen of their ain misdoings; but it is an unnatural thing to let them be buried like dogs, when a' the discredit gangs to the kindred — what kens the dead corse about it?"

“You would not have people neglect their relations on a bridal occasion neither,” said Ravenswood, who was amused with the professional limitation of the grave digger’s philanthropy.

The old man cast up his sharp grey eyes with a shrewd smile, as if he understood the jest, but instantly continued with his former gravity, — “Bridals — wha wad neglect bridals that had ony regard for plenishing the earth? To be sure, they suld be celebrated with all manner of good cheer, and meeting of friends, and musical instruments, harp, sackbut, and psaltery; or gude fiddle and pipes, when these auldwarld instruments of melody are hard to be compassed.”

“The presence of the fiddle, I dare say,” replied Ravenswood, “would atone for the absence of all the others.”

The sexton again looked sharply up at him, as he answered, “Nae doubt — nae doubt — if it were weel played; — but yonder,” he said, as if to change the discourse, “is Halbert Gray’s lang hame, that ye were speering after, just the third bourock beyond the muckle through-stane that stands on sax legs yonder, abune some ane of the Ravenswoods; for there is mony of their kin and followers here, de’il lift them! though it isna just their main burial-place.”

“They are no favourites then of yours these Ravenswoods,” said the Master, not much pleas-

ed with the passing benediction which was thus bestowed on his family and name.

“I ken na wha should favour them,” said the grave-digger; “when they had lands and power, they were ill guides of them baith, and now their head’s down, there’s few care how lang they may be of lifting it again.”

“Indeed!” said Ravenswood, “I never heard that this unhappy family deserved ill-will at the hands of their country. I grant their poverty — if that renders them contemptible.”

“It will gang a far way till’t,” said the sexton of Hermitage, “ye may tak my word for that — at least, I ken naething else that suld mak myself contemptible, and folk are far frae respecting me as they wad do if I lived in a twa-lofted sclated house. But as for the Ravenswoods, I hae seen three generations of them, and de’il ane to mend other.”

“I thought they had enjoyed a fair character in the country,” said their descendant.

“Character! Ou ye see, sir,” said the sexton, “as for the auld gude-sire body of a lord, I lived on his land when I was a swanking young chield, and could hae blawn the trumpet wi’ ony body, for I had wind eneugh then — and touching this trumpeter Marine that I have heard play afore the Lords of the Circuit, I wad hae made nae mair o’ him than of a bairn and a bawbee whistle

— I defy him to hae play'd ,Boot and saddle,' or ,Horse and away,' or ,Gallants, come trot,' with me — he has na the tones."

"But what is all this to old Lord Ravenswood, my friend?" said the Master, who, with an anxiety not unnatural in his circumstances, was desirous of prosecuting the musician's first topic — "What had his memory to do with the degeneracy of the trumpet music?"

"Just this, sir," answered the sexton, "that I lost my wind in his service. Ye see I was trumpeter at the castle, and had allowance for blawing at break of day, and at dinner-time, and other whiles when there was company about, and it pleased my lord; and when he raised his militia to caper awa' to Bothwell Brigg against the wrangheaded wastland whigs, I behoved, reason or nane, to munt a horse and caper awa wi' them."

"And very reasonable," said Ravenswood; "you were his servant and vassal."

"Servitor, say ye?" replied the sexton, "and so I was — but it was to blaw folk to their warm dinner, or at the warst to a decent kirk-yard, and no to skirl them awa' to a bluidy brae side, where there was de'il a bedral but the hooded craw. But bide ye — ye shall hear what cam o't, and how far I am bund to be bedesman to the Ravenswoods. — Till't, ye see, we gae'd on

a braw simmer morning, twenty-fourth of June, sixteen hundred and se'enty-nine, of a' the days of the month and year, — drums beat — guns rattled — horses kicked and trampled. Hackstoun of Rathillet keepit the brigg wi' musket and carabine and pike, sword and scythe for what I ken, and we horsemen were ordered down to cross at the ford, — I hate fords at a' times, let abe when there's thousands of armed men on the other side. There was auld Ravenswood brandishing his Andrew Ferrara at the head, and crying to us to come and buckle to, as if we had been gaun to a fair, — there was Caleb Balderstone, that is living yet, flourishing in the rear, and swearing Gog and Magog, he would put steel through the guts of ony man that turned bridle — there was young Allan Ravenswood, that was then Master, wi' a bended pistol in his hand, — it was a mercy it gaed na aff, — crying to me, that had scarce as much wind left as serve the necessary purpose of my ain lungs, "Sound, you poltroon! sound, you damned cowardly villain, or I will blow your brains out!" and, to be sure, I blew sic points of war, that the scraugh of a clockin-hen was music to them."

"Well, sir, cut all this short," said Ravenswood,

"Short! — I had been like to be cut short

myself, in the flower of my youth, as scripture says; and that's the very thing that I compleen o'. — Weel! in to the water we behoved a' to splash, heels ower head, sit or fa' — ae horse driving on anither, as is the way of brute beasts, and riders that hae as little sense, — the very bushes on the ither side were ableeze, wi' the flashes of the whig guns; and my horse had just taen the grund, when a blackavised westland carle — I wad mind the face o' him a hundred years yet, — an ee like a wild falcon's, and a beard as broad as my shovel, clapped the end o' his lang black gun within a quarters length of my lug! — by the grace of Mercy, the horse swarved round, and I fell aff at the tae side as the ball whistled bye at the tither, and the fell auld lord took the whig such a swauk wi' his broadsword that he made twa pieces o' his head, and down fell the lurdane wi' a' his bowk abune me."

"You were rather obliged to the old lord, I think," said Ravenswood.

"Was I? my sartie! first for bringing me into jeopardy, would I nould I — and then for whomling a chield on the tap of me, that dang the very wind out of my body — I hae been short-breathed ever since, and canna gang twenty yards without peghing like a miller's aiver."

“You lost then your place as trumpeter,” said Ravenswood.”

“Lost it — to be sure I lost it,” replied the sexton, “for I couldna have plaid pew upon a dry humlock; — but I might hae dune weel enough, for I keepit the wage and the free house, and little to do but play on the fiddle to them, but for this Allan Lord Ravenswood, that’s far waur than ever his father was.”

“What,” said the Master, “did my father — I mean did his father’s son — this last Lord Ravenswood, deprive you of what the bounty of his father allowed you?”

“Ay, troth did he,” answered the old man; “for he loot his affairs gang to the dogs, and let in this Sir William Ashton on us, that will gi’e naething for naething, and just removed me and a’ the puir creatures that had bite and soup at the castle, and a hole to put our heads in, when things were in the auld way.”

“If Lord Ravenswood protected his people, my friend, while he had the means of doing so, I think they might spare his memory,” replied Ravenswood.

“Ye are welcome to your ain opinion, sir,” said the sexton; “but ye winna persuade me that he did his duty, either to himsel or to huz poor

dependent creatures, in guiding us the gate he has done — he might hae gi'en us life rent tacks of our bits o' houses and yards — and me, that's an auld man, living in yon miserable cabin, that's fitter for the dead than the quick, and killed wi' rheumatise, and John Smith in my dainty bit mailing, and his window glazen, and a' because Ravenswood guided his gear like a fule."

"It is but too true," said Ravenswood, conscience-struck; "the penalties of extravagance extend far beyond the prodigal's own sufferings."

"However," said the sexton, "this young man Edgar is like to avenge my wrangs on the haill of his kindred."

"Indeed," said Ravenswood; "why should you suppose so?"

"They say he is about to marry the daughter of Liddy Ashton; and let her leddyship get his head ance under her oxters, and see you if she winna gi'e his neck a thrav. Sorra a bit if I were him — Let her alane for hauding a' thing in het water that draws near her — sae the warst wish I shall wish the lad is, that he may take his ain creditable gate o't, and ally himsel wi' his father's enemies, that have taken his broad lands and my bonnie kail-yard from the lawful owners thereof."

Cervantes acutely remarks, that flattery is pleasing even from the mouth of a madman; and censure, as well as praise, often affects us, while we despise the opinions and motives on which it is founded and expressed. Ravenswood, abruptly reiterating his command that Alice's funeral should be attended to, flung away from the sexton, under the painful impression that the great, as well as the small vulgar, would think of his engagement with Lucy like this ignorant and selfish peasant.

«And I have stooped to subject myself to these calumnies, and am rejected notwithstanding. Lucy, your faith must be true and perfect as the diamond, to compensate for the dishonour which men's opinions, and the conduct of your mother, attach to the heir of Ravenswood.”

As he raised his eyes, he beheld the Marquis of A — —, who, having arrived at the Tod's-hole, had walked forth to look for his kinsman.

After mutual greetings, he made some apology to the Master for not coming forward on the preceding evening. «It was his wish,” he said, «to have done so, but he had come to the knowledge of some matters which induced him to delay his purpose. I find,” he said, «there has been a love affair here, kinsman; and though I

might blame you for not having communicated with me, as being in some degree the chief of your family" —

"With your lordship's permission," said Ravenswood, "I am deeply grateful for the interest you are pleased to take in me — but *I* am the chief and head of my family."

"I know it — I know it," said the Marquis; "in a strict heraldic and genealogical sense, you certainly are so — what I mean is, that being in some measure under my guardianship" —

"I must take the liberty to say, my lord," answered Ravenswood — and the tone in which he interrupted the Marquis boded no long duration to the friendship of the noble relatives, when he himself was fortunately interrupted by the little sexton, who came puffing after them, to ask if their honours would chuse music at the change-house to make up for short cheer.

"We want no music," said the Master, abruptly.

"Your honour disna ken what ye're refusing, then," said the fiddler, with the impertinent freedom of his profession. "I can play, Will't thou do't again," and the Auld Man's Mear's

Dead,' sax times better than ever Pattie Birnie. I'll get my fiddle in the turning of a coffin-screw."

"Take yourself away, sir," said the Marquis.

"And if your honour be a north-country gentleman," said the persevering minstrel, "whilk I wad judge from your tongue, I can play, 'Liggeram Cosh,' and 'Mullin Dhu,' and 'the Cummers of Athole.'"

"Take yourself away, friend; you interrupt our conversation."

"Or if, under your honour's favour, ye should happen to be a thought honest, I can play, (this in a low and confidential tone,) 'Killiecrankie,' and 'the King shall hae his ain,' and 'the Auld Stuarts back again,' — and the wife at the change-house is a decent discreet body, neither kens nor cares what toasts are drunken, and what tunes are played in her house — she's deaf to a' thing but the clink o' the siller."

The Marquis, who was sometimes suspected of jacobitism, could not help laughing as he threw the fellow a dollar, and bid him go play to the servants if he had a mind, and leave them at peace.

"Aweel, gentlemen," said he, "I am wishing your honours gude day — I'll be a' the better

of the dollar, and ye'll be the waur of wanting the music, I'se tell ye — But I'se gang hame, and finish the grave in the tuning o' a fiddle-string, and then get my bread-winner, and awa' to your folk, and see if they hae better lugs than their masters."


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CHAPTER. XXV.

*True love, an' thou be true,  
Thou has ane kittle part to play;  
For fortune, fashion, fancy, and thou,  
Maun strive for many a day.*

*I've kenn'd by mony a friend's tale,  
Far better by this heart of mine,  
What time and change of fancy await  
A true love-knot to untwine.*

*Hendersoun.*

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„I WISHED to tell you, my good kinsman,” said the Marquis, „now that we are quit of this impertinent fiddler, that I had tried to discuss this love affair of yours with Sir William Ashton's daughter. I never saw the young lady, but for a few minutes to-day; so, being a stranger to her personal merits, I pay a compliment to you,



and offer her no offence, in saying you might do better."

"My lord, I am much indebted for the interest you have taken in my affairs," said Ravenswood. "I did not intend to have troubled you in any matter concerning Miss Ashton. As my engagement with that young lady has reached your lordship, I can only say, that you must necessarily suppose that I was aware of the objections to my marrying into her father's family, and of course must have been completely satisfied with the reasons by which these objections are over-balanced, since I have proceeded so far in the matter."

"Nay, Master, if you had heard me out," said his noble relation, "you might have spared that observation; for, without questioning that you had reasons which seemed to you to counterbalance every other obstacle, I set myself, by every means that it became me to use towards the Ashtons, to persuade them to meet your views."

"I am obliged to your lordship for your unsolicited intercession," said Ravenswood, "especially as I am sure your lordship would never carry it beyond the bounds which it became me to use."

"Of that," said the Marquis, "you may be confident; I myself felt the delicacy of the matter too much to place a gentleman nearly con-



nected with my house in a degrading or dubious situation with these Ashtons. But I pointed out all the advantages of their marrying their daughter into a house so honourable, and so nearly related with the first in Scotland; I explained the exact degree of relationship in which the Ravenswoods stand to ourselves; and I even hinted how political matters were like to turn, and what cards would be trumps next parliament. I said I regarded you as a son — or a nephew, or so — rather than as a more distant relation; and that I made your affair entirely my own."

"And what was the issue of your lordship's explanation?" said Ravenswood, in some doubt whether he should resent or express gratitude for his interference.

"Why, the Lord Keeper would have listened to reason," said the Marquis; "he is rather unwilling to leave his place, which, in the present view of a change, must vaik; and, to say truth, he seemed to have a liking for you, and to be sensible of the general advantages to be attained by such a match. But his lady, who is tongue of the trump, Master," —

"What of Lady Ashton, my lord?" said Ravenswood; "let me know the issue of this extraordinary conference — I can bear it."

"I am glad of that, kinsman," said the Marquis, "for I am ashamed to tell you half what



she said. It is enough — her mind is made up — and the mistress of a first-rate boarding-school could not have rejected with more haughty indifference the suit of a half-pay Irish officer, beseeching permission to wait upon the heiress of a West-India planter, than Lady Ashton spurned every proposal of mediation which it could at all become me to offer in behalf of you, my good kinsman. I cannot guess what she means. A more honourable connection she could not form, that's certain. As for money and land, that used to be her husband's business rather than her's; I really think she hates you for having the birth that her husband wants, and perhaps for wanting the lands that her Goodman has. But I should only vex you to say more about it — here we are at the change-house."

The Master of Ravenswood paused as he entered the cottage, which reeked through all its crevices, and they were not few, from the exertions of the Marquis's travelling-cooks to supply good cheer, and spread, as it were, a table in the wilderness.

"My Lord Marquis," said Ravenswood, "I already mentioned that accident has put your lordship in possession of a secret, which, with my consent, should have remained one even to you, my kinsman, for some time. Since the secret was to part from my own custody, and



that of the only person besides who was interested in it, I am not sorry it should have reached your lordship's ears, as being fully aware that you are my noble kinsman and friend."

"You may believe it is safely lodged with me, Master of Ravenswood," said the Marquis; "but I should like well to hear you say, that you renounced the idea of an alliance, which you can hardly pursue without a certain degree of degradation."

"Of that, my lord, I shall judge," answered Ravenswood — "and I hope with delicacy as sensitive as any of my friends. But I have no engagement with Sir William and Lady Ashton. It is with Miss Ashton alone that I have entered upon the subject, and my conduct in the matter shall be entirely ruled by her's. If she continues to prefer me in my poverty to the wealthier suitors whom her friends recommend, I may well make some sacrifice to her sincere affection — I may well surrender to her the less tangible and less palpable advantage of birth, and the deep-rooted prejudices of family hatred. If Miss Lucy Ashton should change her mind on a subject of such delicacy, I trust my friends will be silent on my disappointment, and I shall know how to make my enemies so."

"Spoke like a gallant young nobleman," said the Marquis; "for my part I have that regard



for you, that I should be sorry the thing went on. This Sir William Ashton was a pretty enough petty-fogging kind of a lawyer twenty years ago, and betwixt battling at the bar, and leading in committees of Parliament, he has got well on — the Darien matter lent him a lift, for he had good intelligence and sound views, and sold out in time — but the best work is had out of him. No Scotch government will take him at his own, or rather his wife's extravagant valuation; and betwixt his indecision and her insolence, from all I can guess, he will outsit his market, and be had cheap when no one will bid for him. I say nothing of Miss Ashton; but I assure you, a connection with her father will be neither useful nor ornamental, beyond that part of your father's spoils which he may be prevailed upon to disgorge by way of tocher-good — and take my word for it, you will get more if you have spirit to bell the cat with him in the Scots Parliament. — And I will be the man, cousin," continued his lordship "will course the fox for you, and make him rue the day that ever he refused a composition too honourable for him, and proposed by me on the behalf of a kinsman."

There was something in all this that, as it were, overshot the mark. Ravenswood could not disguise from himself that his noble kins-



man had more reasons for taking offence at the reception of his suit, than regarded his interest and honour, yet he could neither complain nor be surprised that it should be so. He contented himself therefore with repeating, that his attachment was to Miss Ashton personally; that he desired neither wealth nor aggrandizement from her father's means and influence, and that nothing should prevent his keeping his engagement, excepting her own express desire that it should be relinquished — and he requested as a favour that the matter might be no more mentioned betwixt them at present, assuring the Marquis of A — that he should be his confident in its progress or its interruption.

The Marquis soon had more agreeable, as well as more interesting subjects on which to converse. A foot-post, who had followed him from Edinburgh to Ravenswood Castle, and had traced his steps to the Tod's-hole, brought them a packet laded with good news. The political calculations of the Marquis had proved just, both in London and at Edinburgh, and he saw almost within his grasp, the pre-eminence for which he had panted. — The refreshments which the servants had prepared were now put on the table, and an epicure would perhaps have enjoyed them with additional zest, from the con-



trast which such fare afforded to the miserable cabin in which it was served up.

The turn of conversation corresponded with and added to the social feelings of the company. The Marquis expanded with pleasure on the power which probable incidents were like to assign to him, and on the use which he hoped to make of it in serving his kinsman Ravenswood. Ravenswood could but repeat the gratitude which he really felt, even when he considered the topic as too long dwelt upon. The wine was excellent, notwithstanding its having been brought in a runlet from Edinburgh; and the habits of the Marquis, when engaged with such good cheer, were somewhat sedentary. And so it fell out that they delayed their journey two hours later than was their original purpose.

„But what of that, my good young friend?“ said the Marquis; „your castle of Wolf's Crag is but at five or six miles distance, and will afford the same hospitality to your kinsman of A — —, that it gave to this same Sir William Ashton.“

„Sir William took the castle by storm,“ said Ravenswood, „and, like many a victor, had little reason to congratulate himself on his conquest.“



„Well, well!” said Lord A — —, whose dignity was something relaxed by the wine he had drunk, — „I see I must bribe you to harbour me — come, pledge me in a bumper health to the last young lady that slept at Wolf’s Crag, and liked her quarters. — My bones are not so tender as hers, and I am resolved to occupy her apartment to night, that I may judge how hard the couch is that love can soften.”

„Your lordship may chuse what penance you please,” said Ravenswood; „but I assure you, I should expect my old servant to hang himself, or throw himself from the battlements, should your lordship visit him so unexpectedly — I do assure you, we are totally and literally unprovided.”

But his declaration only brought from his noble patron an assurance of his own total indifference as to every species of accommodation, and his determination to see the tower of Wolf’s Crag. His ancestor, he said, had been feasted there, when he went forward with the then Lord Ravenswood to the fatal battle of Flodden, in which they both fell. Thus hard pressed, the Master offered to ride forward to get matters put in such preparation, as time and circumstances admitted; but the Marquis protested, his kinsman must afford him his company, and would only



consent that an avant-courier should carry to the destined Seneschal, Caleb Balderstone, the unexpected news of this invasion.

The Master of Ravenswood soon after accompanied the Marquis in his carriage, as the latter had proposed; and when they became better acquainted in the progress of the journey, his noble relation explained the very liberal views which he entertained for his relation's preferment, in case of the success of his own political schemes. They related to a secret, and highly important commission beyond sea, which could only be entrusted to a person of rank, talent, and perfect confidence, and which, as it required great trust and reliance on the envoy employed, could not but prove both honourable and advantageous to him. We need not enter into the nature and purpose of this commission, farther than to acquaint our readers, that the charge was in prospect highly acceptable to the Master of Ravenswood, who hailed with pleasure the hope of emerging from his present state of indigence and inaction, into independence and honourable exertion.

While he listened thus eagerly to the details with which the Marquis now thought it necessary to entrust him, the messenger who had been dispatched to the Tower of Wolf's Crag,



returned with Caleb Balderstone's humble duty, and an assurance, that «a' should be in seemly order, sic as the hurry of time permitted, to receive their lordships as it behoved.”

Ravenswood was too well accustomed to his Seneschal's mode of acting and speaking, to hope much from this confident assurance. He knew that Caleb acted upon the principle of the Spanish generals, in the campaign of —, who, much to the perplexity of the Prince of Orange, their commander in chief, used to report their troops as full in number, and possessed of all necessary points of equipment, not considering it consistent with their dignity, or the honour of Spain, to confess any deficiency either in men or munition, until the want of both was unavoidably discovered in the day of battle. Accordingly, Ravenswood thought it necessary to give the Marquis some hint, that the fair assurance which they had just received from Caleb, did not by any means ensure them against a very indifferent reception.

«You do yourself injustice, Master,” said the Marquis, «or you wish to surprise me agreeably. From this window I see a great light in the direction where, if I remember aright, Wolf's Crag lies; and, to judge from the splendour which the old tower sheds around it, the pre-



parations for our reception must be of no ordinary description. I remember your father putting the same deception on me, when we went to the tower for a few days hawking, about twenty years since, and yet we spent our time as jollily at Wolf's Crag as we could have done at my own hunting seat at B ——."

"Your lordship, I fear, will experience that the faculty of the present proprietor to entertain his friends is greatly abridged," said Ravenswood; "the will, I need hardly say, remains the same. But I am as much at a loss as your lordship to account for so strong and brilliant a light as is now above Wolf's Crag, — the windows of the tower are few and narrow, and those of the lower story are hidden from us by the walls of the court. — I cannot conceive that any illumination of an ordinary nature could afford such a blaze of light."

The mystery was soon explained; for the cavalcade almost instantly halted, and the voice of Caleb Balderstone was heard at the coach window, exclaiming, in accents broken by grief and fear, "Och, gentlemen — Och, my gude lords — Och, haud to the right! — Wolf's Crag is burning, bower and ha' — a' the rich plenishing outside and inside — a' the finegraith, pictures, tapestries, needle-work, hangings,



and other decorements, — a' in a bleeze, as if they were nae mair than sae mony peats, or as muckle pease strae. Haud to the right, gentlemen, I implore ye — there is some sma' provision making at Lucky Sma'trash's — but O, wae for this night, and wae for me that lives to see it!" —

Ravenswood was at first stunned by this new and unexpected calamity; but after a moment's recollection, he sprang from the carriage, and hastily bidding his noble kinsman good night, was about to ascend the hill towards the castle, the broad and full conflagration of which now flung forth a high column of red light, that flickered far to seaward upon the dashing waves of the ocean.

"Take a horse, Master," exclaimed the Marquis, greatly affected by this additional misfortune, so unexpectedly heaped upon his young protégé; "and give me my ambling palfrey, and haste forward, you knaves, to see what can be done to save the furniture, or to extinguish the fire — ride, you knaves, for your lives."

The attendants bustled together, and began to strike their horses with the spur, and call upon Caleb to shew them the road. But the voice of that careful Seneschal was heard above the tumult, "O stop — sirs, stop — turn bridle, for



the luvie of mercy — add not loss of lives to loss of warld's gear. — Thirty barrels of powther landed out of a Dunkirk dogger in the auld Lord's time — a' in the vau'ts of the auld tower, — the fire canna be far aff it, I trow — Lord's sake, to the right, lads — to the right — lets pit the hill atween us and peril, — a wap wi' a corner-stane o' Wolf's Crag wad defy the doctor."

It will readily be supposed that this annunciation hurried the Marquis and his attendants into the route which Caleb prescribed, dragging Ravenswood along with them, although there was much in the matter which he could not possibly comprehend. "Gun-powder!" he exclaimed, laying hold of Caleb, who in vain endeavoured to escape from him, "what gun-powder? How any quantity of powder could be in Wolf's Crag without my knowledge, I cannot possibly comprehend."

"But I can," interrupted the Marquis, whispering him, "I can comprehend it thoroughly — for God's sake, ask him no more questions at present."

"There it is now," said Caleb, extricating himself from his master, and adjusting his dress, "your honour will believe his lordship's honourable testimony — His lordship minds weel, how,



in the year that him they ca'd King Willie died" —

"Hush! hush, my good friend!" said the Marquis; "I shall satisfy your master upon that subject."

"And the people at Wolf's hope —" said Ravenswood, "did none of them come to your assistance before the flame got so high?"

"Aye did they, mony ane of them, the rascallions," said Caleb; "but truly I was in nae hurry to let them into the tower, where there were so much plate and valuables."

"Confound you for an impudent liar," said Ravenswood; "there was not a single ounce of" —

"Forbye," said the Butler, most irreverently raising voice to a pitch which drowned his master's, "the fire made fast on us, owing to the store of tapestry and carved timmer in the banqueting ha', and the loons ran like scauded rats so soon as they heard of the gunpouter."

"I do entreat," said the Marquis to Ravenswood, "you will ask him no more questions."

"Only one, my lord — What has become of poor Mysie?"



“Mysie?” said Caleb — “I had nae time to look about ony Mysie — she’s in the tower, I’s e warrant, biding her awful doom.”

“By heaven!” said Ravenswood, “I do not understand all this — the life of a faithful old creature is at stake — my lord, I will be withheld no longer — I will at least ride up, and see whether the danger is as imminent as this old fool pretends.”

“Weel, then, as I live by bread,” said Caleb, “Mysie is weel and safe. I saw her out of the castle before I left it mysell — Was I ganging to forget an auld fellow-servant?”

“What made you tell me the contrary this moment?” said his master.

“Did I say otherwise?” answered Caleb; “then I maun hae been dreaming surely, or this awesome night has turned my judgment — but safe she is, and ne’er a living soul in the castle, a’ the better for them — they wad have gotten an unco heezy.”

The Master of Ravenswood, upon this assurance being solemnly reiterated, and notwithstanding his extreme wish to witness the last explosion, which was to ruin to the ground the mansion of his fathers, suffered himself to be



dragged onward towards the village of Wolf's-hope, where not only the change-house, but that of our own well-known friend the cooper, were all prepared for reception of himself and his noble guest, with a liberality of provision which requires some explanation.

We omitted to mention in its place, that Lockhard having fished out the truth concerning the mode by which Caleb had obtained the supplies for his banquet, the Lord Keeper, amused with the incident, and desirous at the time to gratify Ravenswood, had recommended the cooper of Wolf's-hope to the official situation under government, the prospect of which had reconciled him to the loss of his wild-fowl. Mr Girder's preferment had occasioned a pleasing surprise to old Caleb; for when, some days after his master's departure, he found himself absolutely compelled, by some necessary business, to visit the fishing hamlet, and was gliding like a ghost past the door of the cooper, for fear of being summoned to give some account of the progress of the solicitation in his favour, or, more probably, that the inmates might upbraid him with the false hope he had held out upon the subject, he heard himself, not without some apprehension, summoned at once in treble, tenor, and bass, — a trio performed by the voices of Mrs Girder, old Dame



Loup-thedike, and the goodman of the dwelling — “Mr Caleb — Mr Caleb — Mr Caleb Balderstone! I hope ye arena ganging dry-lipped by our door, and we sae muckle indebted to you?”

This might be said ironically as well as in earnest. Caleb augured the worst, turned a deaf ear to the trio aforesaid, and was moving doggedly on, his ancient castor pulled over his brows, and his eyes bent on the ground, as if to count the flinty pebbles with which the rude pathway was causewayed. But on a sudden he found himself surrounded in his progress, like a stately merchantman in the Gut of Gibraltar, (I hope the ladies will excuse the tarpaulin phrase,) by three Algerine gallies.

“Gude guide us, Mr Balderstone!” said Mrs Girder.

“Wha wad hae thought it of an auld and kenn’d friend!” said the mother.

“No sae muckle as stay to receive our thanks,” said the cooper himself, “and frae the like o’ me that seldom offer them. I am sure I hope there’s nae ill seed sown between us, Mr Balderstone — Ony man that has said to ye, I am no gratefu’ for the situation of Queen’s cooper,



let me hae a whample at him wi' mine eatche\*  
— that's a'."

"My good friends — my dear friends," said Caleb, still doubting how the certainty of the matter might stand, "what needs a' this ceremony? — ane tries to serve their friends, and sometimes they may happen to prosper, and sometimes to misgi'e — naething I care to be fashed wi' less than thanks — I never could bide them."

"Faith, Mr Balderstone, ye suld hae been fashed wi' few o' mine," said the downright man of staves and hoops, "if I had only your gude-will to thank ye for — I suld e'en hae set the guse, and the wild-deukes, and the runlet of sack, to balance that account. Gude-will, man, is a geizen'd tub, that hauds in nae liquor — but gude deed's like the cask, tight, round, and sound, that will haud liquor for the king."

"Have ye no heard of our letter," said the mother-in-law, "making John the Queen's cooper for certain? — and scarce a chield that had ever hammered gird upon tub but was applying for it?"

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\* *Anglice*, adze.



“Have I heard!!!” said Caleb, (who now found how the wind set,) with an accent of strong contempt at the doubt expressed — “Have I heard, quo’ she!!!” — and as he spoke, he changed his shambling, skulking, dodging pace, into a manly and authoritative step, re-adjusted his cocked hat, and suffered his brow to emerge from under it in all the pride of aristocracy, like the sun from behind a cloud.

„To be sure, he canna but hae heard,” said the good woman.

“Ay, to be sure it’s impossible but I should,” said Caleb; “and sae I’ll be the first to kiss ye, joe, and wish you, cooper, much joy of your preferment, naething doubting but ye ken wha are your friends, and have helped ye, and can help ye. I thought it right to look a wee strange upon it at first,” added Caleb, “just to see if ye were made of the right mettle — but ye ring true, lad, ye ring true.”

So saying, with a most lordly air he kissed the women, and abandoned his hand, with an air of serene patronage, to the hearty shake of Mr Girder’s horn-hard palm. Upon this complete, and to Caleb most satisfactory information, he did not, it may readily be believed, hesitate to accept an invitation to a solemn



feast, to which were invited, not only all the *notables* of the village, but even his ancient antagonist, Mr Dingwall himself. At this festivity he was, of course, the most welcome and most honoured guest; and so well did he ply the company with stories of what he could do with his master, his master with the Lord Keeper, the Lord Keeper with the Council, and the Council with the King, that before the company dismissed, (which was, indeed, rather at an early hour than a late one,) every man of note in the village was ascending to the top gallant of some ideal preferment by the ladder of ropes which Caleb had presented to their imagination. Nay, the cunning Butler regained in that moment, not only all the influence he possessed formerly over the villagers, when the baronial family which he served were at the proudest, but acquired even an accession of importance. The writer — the very attorney himself — such is the thirst of preferment — felt the force of the attraction, and taking an opportunity to draw Caleb into a corner, spoke, with affectionate regret, of the declining health of the sheriff-clerk of the county.

«An excellent man — a most valuable man, Mr Caleb — but fat sall I say! — we are peer feckless bodies — here the day, and awa' by cock-screech the morn — and if he failzies,



there maun be somebody in his place — and gif that ye could airt it my way, I suld be thankful, man — a gluve stuffed wi' gowd nobles — an' hark ye, man, something canny till yoursell — and the W'olf's-hope carles to settle kindly wi' the Master of Ravenswood — that is, Lord Ravenswood — God bless his lordship."

A smile, and a hearty squeeze by the hand, was the suitable answer to this overture, and Caleb made his escape from the jovial party, in order to avoid committing himself by any special promises.

"The Lord be gude to me," said Caleb, when he found himself in the open air, and at liberty to give vent to the self-exultation with which he was, as it were, distended; "did ever ony man see sic a set of green-gaislings! — the very pick-maws and solan-geese out by yonder at the Bass hae ten times their sense — God, an' I had been the Lord High Commissioner to the Estates o' Parliament, they couldna hae beflumm'd me mair — and, to speak Heaven's truth, I could hardly hae beflumm'd them better neither. But the writer — ha! ha! ha! — mercy on me, that I suld live in my auld days to gi'e the gang-bye to the very writer! Sheriff-clerk!!! — But I hae an auld account to settle wi' the carle; and to make amends for



bye-ganes, the office shall just cost him as much time-serving and tide-serving, as if he were to get it in gude earnest — of whilk there is sma' appearance, unless the Master learns mair the ways of this warld, whilk it is muckle to be doubted that he never will."



## CHAPTER XXVI.

*Why flames yon far summit — why shoot to  
the blast*

*Those embers, like stars from the firmament  
cast? —*

*'Tis the fire-shower of ruin, all dreadfully  
driven*

*From thine eyrie, that beacons the darkness  
of Heaven.*

*Campbell.*

THE circumstances announced in the conclusion of the last chapter, will account for the ready and cheerful reception of the Marquis of A — and the Master of Ravenswood in the village of Wolf's-hope. In fact, Caleb had no sooner announced the conflagration of the tower, than the whole hamlet were upon foot to hasten to extinguish the flames. And although that



zealous adherent diverted their zeal by intimating the formidable contents of the subterranean apartments, yet the check only turned their assiduity into another direction. Never had there been such slaughtering of capons, and fat geese, and barn-door fowls, — never such boiling of *reested* hams, — never such making of car-cakes and sweet scones, Selkirk, bannocks, kookies, and petticoat-tails, delicacies little known to the present generation. Never had there been such a tapping of barrels, and such uncorking of grey-beards, in the village of Wolf's-hope. All the inferior houses were thrown open for the reception of the Marquis's dependants, who came, it was thought, as precursors of the shower of preferment, which hereafter was to leave the rest of Scotland dry, in order to distil its rich dews on the village of Wolf's-hope under Lammermoor. The minister put in his claim to have the guests of distinction lodged at the Manse, having his eye, it was thought, upon a neighbouring preferment, where the incumbent was sickly; but Mr Balderstone destined that honour to the cooper, his wife, and wife's mother, who danced for joy at the preference thus assigned them.

Many a beck and many a bow welcomed these noble guests to as good entertainment as persons of such a rank could set before such visi-



tors; and the old dame, who had formerly lived in Ravenswood Castle, and knew, as she said, the ways of the nobility, was no ways wanting in arranging matters, as well as circumstances permitted, according to the etiquette of the times. The cooper's house was so roomy, that each guest had his separate retiring room, to which they were ushered with all due ceremony, while the plentiful supper was in the act of being placed upon the table.

Ravenswood no sooner found himself alone, than, impelled by a thousand feelings, he left the apartment, the house, and the village, and hastily retraced his steps to the brow of the hill, which rose betwixt the village, and screened it from the tower, in order to view the final fall of the house of his fathers. Some idle boys from the hamlet had taken the same direction out of curiosity, having first witnessed the arrival of the coach-and-six and its attendants. As they ran one by one past the Master, calling to each other to «come and see the auld tower blaw up in the lift like the peelings of an ingan,” he could not but feel himself moved with indignation. «And these are the sons of my father's vassals,” he said — «of men bound, both by law and gratitude, to follow our steps through battle, and fire, and flood; and now



the destruction of their liege-lord's house is but a holiday's sight to them!"

These exasperating reflections were partly expressed in the acrimony with which he exclaimed, on feeling himself pulled by the cloak, — "What do ye want, ye dog?"

"I am a dog, and an auld dog too," answered Caleb, for it was he who had taken the freedom, — "and I am like to get a dog's wages — but it does not signification a pinch of sneeshing, for I am ower auld a dog to learn new tricks, or to follow a new master"

As he spoke, Ravenswood attained the ridge of the hill from which Wolf's Crag was visible; the flames had entirely sunk down, and to his great surprise, there was only a dusky reddening upon the clouds immediately over the castle, which seemed the reflection of the embers of the sunken fire.

"The place cannot have blown up," said the Master; "we must have heard the report — if a quarter of the gunpowder was there you tell me of, it would have been heard twenty miles off."

"It's very like it wad," said Balderstone, composedly.

"Then the fire cannot have reached the vaults — —"



“It’s like no,” answered Caleb, with the same impenetrable gravity.

“Hark ye, Caleb,” said his master, “this grows a little too much for my patience. I must go and examine how matters stand at Wolf’s Crag myself.”

“Your honour is ganging to gang nae sic gate,” said Caleb, firmly.

“And why not?” said Ravenswood, sharply; “who or what shall prevent me?”

“Even I mysel,” said Caleb, with the same determination.

“You, Balderstone!” replied the Master, “you are forgetting yourself, I think.”

“But I think no,” said Balderstone; “for I can just tell you a’ about the castle on this know-head as weel as if you were at it. Only dinna pit yoursel into a kippage, and expose yoursel before the weans, or before the Marquis, when ye gang down bye.”

“Speak out, you old fool,” replied his master, “and let me know the best and the worst at once.”

“Ou, the best and warst is just that the tower is standing hail and fear, as safe and as empty as when ye left it.”



“Indeed! — and the fire?” said Ravenswood.

“Not a gleed of fire, then, except the bit kindling peat, and maybe a spunk in Mysie’s cutty-pipe,” replied Caleb.

“But the flame?” demanded Ravenswood; “the broad blaze which might have been seen ten miles off — what occasioned that?”

“Hout awa! it’s an auld saying and a true, —

Little’s the light

Will be seen far in a mirk night.

A wheen fern and horse litter that I fired in the court-yard, after sending back the loun of a footman; and, to speak Heaven’s truth, the next time that ye send or bring ony body here, let them be gentles allenarly, without ony fremd servants, like that chield Lockhard, to be gledging and gleeing about, and looking upon the wrang side of ane’s housekeeping, to the discredit of the family, and forcing ane to damn their souls wi’ telling ae lee after another faster than I can count them — I wad rather set fire to the tower in gude earnest, and burn it ower my ain head into the bargain, or I see the family dishonoured in the sort.”

“Upon my word, I am infinitely obliged by the proposal, Caleb,” said his master, scarce



able to restrain his laughter, — though rather angry at the same time. “But the gunpowder? — is there such a thing in the tower? — the Marquis seemed to know of it.”

“The pouter — ha! ha! ha! — the Marquis — ha! ha! ha!” replied Caleb; “if your honour were to brain me, I behooved to laugh — the Marquis — the pouter — was it there? ay, it was there. Did he ken o’t? — my certie! the Marquis kenn’d o’t, and it was the best of the game; for, when I couldna pacify your honour wi’ a’ that I could say, I aye threw out a word mair about the gunpouter, and garr’d the Marquis tak the job in his ain hand.”

“But you have not answered my question,” said the Master impatiently; “how came the powder there, and where is it now?”

“Ou, it came there, an ye maun needs ken,” said Caleb, looking mysteriously, and whispering, “when there was like to be a wee bit rising here; and the Marquis, and a’ the great lords of the north, were a’ in it, and mony a gudely gun and broadsword were ferried ower frae Dunkirk forbye the pouter — awfu’ wark we had getting them into the tower under cloud o’ night, for ye maun think it wasna every body could be trusted wi’ sae kittle jobs — But if ye



will gae hame to your supper, I will tell you a' about it as ye gang down."

"And these wretched boys," said Ravenswood, "is it your pleasure they are to sit there all night, to wait for the blowing up of a tower that is not even on fire?"

"Surely not, if it is your honour's pleasure that they suld gang hame; although," added Caleb, "it wadna do them a grain's damage — they wad screigh less the next day, and sleep the sounder at e'en — But just as your honour likes."

Stepping accordingly towards the urchins who manned the knolls near which they stood, Caleb informed them, in an authoritative tone, that their Honours Lord Ravenswood and the Marquis of A — had given orders that the tower was not to blow up till next day at noon. The boys dispersed upon this comfortable assurance. One or two, however, followed Caleb for more information, particularly the urchin whom he had cheated while officiating as turnspit, who screamed, "Mr Balderstone! Mr Balderstone! than the castle's gane out like an auld wife's spunk!"

"To be sure it is, callant," said the Butler; "do ye think the castle of as great a lord as Lord Ravenswood wad continue in a bleeze, and



him standing looking on wi' his ain very een? — It's aye right," continued Caleb, shaking off his ragged page, and closing in to his master, "to train up weans, as the wise man says, in the way they should go, and aboon a' to teach them respect to their superiors."

"But all this while, Caleb, you have never told me what became of the arms and powder," said Ravenswood.

"Why, as for the arms," said Caleb, "it was just like the bairns' rhyme —

Some gaed east, and some gaed west,  
And some gaed to the crow's nest;

And for the pouthier, I e'en changed it, as occasion served, with the skippers o' Dutch luggers and French vessels, for gin and brandy, and it served the house mony a year — a gude swap too, between what cheereth the soul of man and that which dingeth it clean out of the body; forbye, I keepit a wheen pounds of it for yoursell when ye wanted to take the pleasure o' shooting — whiles, in these latter days, I wad hardly hae kenn'd else whar to get pouthier for your pleasure. And now that your anger is ower, sir, wasna that weel managed o' me, and arena ye far better sorted down yonder than ye



could hae been in your ain auld ruins up bye yonder, as the case stands wi' us now? — the mair's the pity."

"I believe you may be right, Caleb; but, before burning down my castle, either in jest or in earnest," said Ravenswood, "I think I had a right to be in the secret."

"Fie for shame, your honour!" replied Caleb; "it fits an auld carle sike me weel eneugh to tell lees for the credit of the family, but it wadna beseem the like o' your honour's sell; besides, young folk are no judicious — they cannot make the maist of a bit figment. Now this fire — for a fire it sall be, if I suld burn the auld stable to make it mair feasible — this fire, besides that it will be an excuse for asking ony thing we want through the country, or doun at the haven — this fire will settle mony things on an honourable footing for the family's credit, that cost me telling twenty daily lees to a wheen idle chaps and queans, and, what's waur, without gaining credence."

"That was hard indeed, Caleb; but I do not see how this fire should help your veracity or your credit."

"There it is now," said Caleb; "wasna I saying that young folk had a green judgement? —



How suld it help me, quotha? — it will be a creditable apology for the honour of the family for this score of years to come, if it is weel guided. Where's the family pictures? says ae meddling body — the great fire at Wolf's Crag, answers I. Where's the family plate? says another — the great fire, says I; wha was to think of plate when life and limb were in danger? — Where's the wardrobe and the linens? — where's the tapestries and the decorements? — beds of state, twilts, pands and testors, napery and broidered work? — The fire — the fire — the fire. Guide the fire weel, and it will serve ye for a' that ye suld have and have not — and, in some sort, a gude excuse is better than the things themselves; for they maun crack and wear out, and be consumed by time, whereas a gude offcome, prudently and creditably handled, may serve a nobleman and his family, Lord kens how lang! "

Ravenswood was too well acquainted with his Butler's pertinacity and self-opinion, to dispute the point with him any further. Leaving Caleb, therefore, to the enjoyment of his own successful ingenuity, he returned to the hamlet, where he found the Marquis and the good women of the mansion under some anxiety — the former on account of his absence, the others for the discredit their cookery might sustain by



the delay of the supper. All were now at ease, and heard with pleasure that the fire at the castle had burned out of itself without reaching the vaults, which was the only information that Ravenswood thought it proper to give in public concerning the event of his Butler's stratagem.

They sat down to an excellent supper. No invitation could prevail on Mr and Mrs Girder, even in their own house, to sit down at table with guests of such high quality. They remained standing in the apartment, and acted the part of respectful and careful attendants on the company. Such were the manners of the time. The elder dame, confident through her age and connection with the Ravenswood family, was less scrupulously ceremonious. She played a mixed part betwixt that of the hostess of an inn, and the mistress of a private house, who receives guests above her own degree. She recommended, and even pressed what she thought best, and was herself easily entreated to take a moderate share of the good cheer, in order to encourage her guests by her own example. Often she interrupted herself, to express her regret that «my Lord did not eat — that the Master was pyking a bare bane — that, to be sure, there was naething there fit to set before their honours — that Lord Allan, rest his saul, used to like a pouthered guse, and said it was Latin



for a tass o' brandy — that the brandy came frae France direct; for, for a' the English laws and gaugers, the Wolf's-hope brigs hadna forgotten the gate to Dunkirk."

Here the cooper admonished his mother-in-law with his elbow, which procured him the following special notice in the progress of her speech.

"Ye needna be dunshin that gate, John," continued the old lady; "naebody says that *ye* ken whar the brandy comes from; and it wadna be fitting ye should, and you the queen's cooper; and what signifies't," continued she, addressing Lord Ravenswood, "to king, queen, or keiser, whar an auld wife like me buys her pickle sneeshin, or her drap brandy-wine, to haud her heart up?"

Having thus extricated herself from her supposed false step, Dame Loup-the-dyke proceeded, during the rest of the evening, to supply, with great animation, and very little assistance from her guests, the funds necessary for the support of the conversation, until, declining any further circulation of their glass, her guests requested her permission to retire to their apartments.

The Marquis occupied the chamber of dais, which, in every house above the rank of a mere



cottage, was kept sacred for such high occasions as the present. The modern finishing with plaster was then unknown, and tapestry was confined to the houses of the nobility and superior gentry. The cooper, therefore, who was a man of some vanity, as well as some wealth, had imitated the fashion observed by the inferior landholders and clergy, who usually garnished their state apartments with hangings of a sort of stamped leather, manufactured in the Netherlands, garnished with trees and animals executed in copper foil, and with many a pithy sentence of morality, which, although couched in Low Dutch, were perhaps as much attended to in practice as if written in broad Scotch. The whole had somewhat of a gloomy aspect; but the fire, composed of old pitch-barrel staves, blazed merrily up the chimney; the bed was decorated with linen of most fresh and dazzling whiteness, which had never before been used, and might, perhaps, have never been used at all, but for this high occasion. On the toilette beside, stood an old-fashioned mirror, in a fillagree frame, part of the dispersed finery of the neighbouring castle. It was flanked by a long-necked bottle of Florence wine, by which stood a glass nearly as tall, resembling in shape that which Teniers usually places in the hands of his own por-



trait, when he paints himself as mingling in the revels of a country-village. To counterbalance those foreign centinels, there mounted guard on the other side of the mirror two stout warders of Scottish lineage; a jug, namely, of double ale, which held a Scotch pint, and a quegh or bicker of ivory and ebony, hooped with silver, the work of John Girder's own hands, and the pride of his heart. Besides these preparations against thirst, there was a goodly diet-loaf, or sweet cake; so that, with such auxiliaries, the apartment seemed victualled against a siege of two or three days.

It only remains to say, that the Marquis's valet was in attendance, displaying his master's brocaded night-gown, and richly embroidered velvet cap, lined and faced with Brussels lace, upon a huge leathern easy chair, wheeled round so as to have the full advantage of the comfortable fire which we have already mentioned. We therefore commit that eminent person to his night's repose, trusting he profited by the ample preparations made for his accommodation, — preparations which we have mentioned in detail, as illustrative of ancient Scottish manners.

It is not necessary we should be equally minute in describing the sleeping apartment of the Master of Ravenswood, which was that usually



occupied by the goodman and goodwife themselves. It was comfortably hung with a sort of warm-coloured worsted, manufactured in Scotland, approaching in texture to what is now called shaloon. A staring picture of John Girder himself ornamented this dormitory, painted by a starving Frenchman, who had, God knows how or why, strolled over from Flushing or Dunkirk to Wolf's-hope in a smuggling dogger. The features were, indeed, those of the stubborn, opinionative, yet sensible artizan, but Monsieur had contrived to throw a French grace into the look and manner, so utterly inconsistent with the dogged gravity of the original, that it was impossible to look at it without laughing. John and his family, however, piqued themselves not a little upon this picture, and were proportionably censured by the neighbourhood, who pronounced that the cooper, in sitting for the same, and yet more in presuming to hang it up in his bed-chamber, had exceeded his privilege as the richest man of the village; at once stept beyond the bounds of his own rank, and encroached upon those of the superior orders; and, in fine, had been guilty of a very over-weening act of vanity and presumption. Respect for the memory of my deceased friend, Mr Richard Tinto, has obliged me to treat this matter at some length; but I spare the reader prolix, though curious ob-



servations, as well upon the character of the French school, as upon the state of painting in Scotland, at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The other preparations of the Master's sleeping apartment, were similar to those in the chamber of dais.

At the usual early hour of that period, the Marquis of A —— and his kinsman prepared to resume their journey. This could not be done without an ample breakfast, in which cold meat and hot meat, and oatmeal flummery, wine and spirits, and milk varied by every possible mode of preparation, evinced the same desire to do honour to their guests, which had been shewn by the hospitable owners of the mansion upon the evening before. All the bustle of preparation for departure now resounded through Wolf's-hope. There was paying of bills and shaking of hands, and saddling of horses, and harnessing of carriages, and distributing of drink-money. The Marquis left a broad piece for the gratification of John Girder's household, which he, the said John, was for some time disposed to convert to his own use; Dingwall the writer assuring him he was justified in so doing, seeing he was the disburser of those expences which were the occasion of the gratification. But, not-



withstanding this legal authority, John could not find in his heart to dim the splendour of his late hospitality, by pocketting any thing in the nature of a gratuity. He only assured his menials he would consider them as a damned ungrateful pack, if they bought a gill of brandy elsewhere than out of his own stores; and as the drink-money was likely to go to its legitimate use, he comforted himself that, in this manner, the Marquis's donative would, without any impeachment of credit and character, come ultimately into his own exclusive possession.

While arrangements were making for departure, Ravenswood made blythe the heart of his ancient butler, by informing him, cautiously however, for he knew Caleb's warmth of imagination, of the probable change which was about to take place in his fortunes. He deposited with Balderstone, at the same time, the greater part of his slender funds, with an assurance which he was obliged to reiterate more than once, that he himself had sufficient supplies in certain prospect. He, therefore, enjoined Caleb, as he valued his favour, to desist from all further manœuvres against the inhabitants of Wolf's-hope, their cellars, poultry, yards, and substance whatsoever. In this prohibition, the old domestic acquiesced more readily than his master expected.



“It was doubtless,” he said, “a shame, a discredit, and a sin, to harry the puir creatures, when the family were in circumstances to live honourably on their ain means; and there might be wisdom,” he said, “in giving them a while’s breathing time, at any rate, that they might be the more readily brought forwards upon his honour’s future occasions.”

This matter being settled, and having taken an affectionate farewell of his old domestic, the Master rejoined his noble relative, who was now ready to enter his carriage. The two landladies, old and young, in all kindly greeting, stood simpering at the door of their house, as the coach and six, followed by its train of clattering horsemen, thundered out of the village. John Girder also stood upon his threshold, now looking at his honoured right hand, which had been so lately shaken by a marquis and a lord, and now giving a glance into the interior of his mansion, which manifested all the disarray of the late revel, as if balancing the distinction which he had attained with the expences of the entertainment.

At length he opened his oracular jaws. “Let every man and woman here set about their ain business, as if there was nae sic thing as marquis or master, duke or drake, laird or lord,



in this world. Let the house be redd up, the broken meat set bye, and if there is ony thing totally uneatable, let it be gien to the puir folk; and gudemother and wife, I hae just ae thing to entreat ye, that ye will never speak to me a single word, good or bad, anent a' this nonsense wark, but keep a' your cracks about it to yoursells and your kimmers, for my head is weel nigh dung donnart wi' it already."

As John's authority was tolerably absolute, all departed to their usual occupations, leaving him to build castles in the air, if he had a mind, upon the court favour which he had acquired by the expenditure of his worldly substance.



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CHAPTER XXVII.

*Why, now I have Dame Fortune by the fore-
lock,*

*And if she scapes my grasp, the fault is mine;
He that hath buffeted with stern adversity,
Best knows to shape his course to favouring
breezes.*

Old Play.

Our travellers reached Edinburgh without any farther adventure, and the Master of Ravenswood, as had been previously settled, took up his abode with his noble friend.

In the mean time, the political crisis which had been expected, took place, and the Tory party obtained, in the Scottish councils of Queen Anne, a short-lived ascendancy, of which it is not our business to trace either the cause or consequences. Suffice it to say, that it affected the

different political parties according to the nature of their principles. In England, many of the High Church party, with Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford, at their head, affected to separate their principles from those of the Jacobites, and, on that account, obtained the denomination of Whimsicals. The Scottish High Church party, on the contrary, or, as they termed themselves, the Cavaliers, were more consistent, if not so prudent, in their politics, and viewed all the changes now made, as preparatory to calling to the throne, upon the queen's demise, her brother, the Chevalier St George. Those who had suffered in his service, now entertained the most unreasonable hopes, not only of indemnification, but of vengeance upon their political adversaries, while families attached to the Whig interest, saw nothing before them but a renewal of the hardships they had undergone during the reigns of Charles the Second and his brother, and a retaliation of the confiscations which had been inflicted upon the Jacobites during that of King William.

But the most alarmed at the change of system, was that prudential set of persons, some of whom are found in all governments, but who abound in a provincial administration like that of Scotland during the period, and who are what Cromwell called waiters upon providence, or,

in other words, uniform adherents to the party who are uppermost. Many of these hastened to read their recantation to the Marquis of A — —; and, as it was easily seen, that he took a deep interest in the affairs of his kinsman, the Master of Ravenswood, they were the first to suggest measures for retrieving at least a part of his property, and for restoring him in blood against his father's attainder.

Old Lord Turntippet professed to be one of the most anxious for the success of these measures; for «it grieved him to the very saul,” he said, «to see so brave a young gentleman, of sic auld and undoubted nobility, and, what was mair than a’ that, a bluid relation of the Marquis of A — —, the man whom,” he swore, „he honoured most upon the face of the yearth, brought to so severe a pass. For his ain puir peculiar,” as he said, «and to contribute something to the rehabilitation of sae auld ane house,” the said Turntippet sent in three family pictures lacking the frames, and six high-backed chairs, with worked Turkey cushions, having the crest of Ravenswood broidered thereon, without charging a penny either of the principal or interest they had cost him, when he bought them, sixteen years before, at a roup of the furniture of Lord Ravenswood’s lodgings in the Canongate.

Much more to Lord Turntippet’s dismay than

to his surprise, although he affected to feel more of the latter than the former, the Marquis received his gift very drily, and observed, that his lordship's restitution, if he expected it to be received by the Master of Ravenswood and his friends, must comprehend a pretty large farm, which having been mortgaged to Turntip-pet for a very inadequate sum, he had contrived, during the confusion of the family affairs, and by means well understood by the lawyers of that period, to acquire to himself in absolute property.

The old time-serving lord winced excessively under this requisition, protesting to God, that he saw no occasion the lad could have for the instant possession of the land, seeing he would doubtless now recover the bulk of his estate from Sir William Ashton, to which he was ready to contribute by every means in his power, as was just and reasonable; and finally declaring, that he was willing to settle the land on the young gentleman, after his own natural demise.

But all these excuses availed nothing, and he was compelled to disgorge the property, on receiving back the sum for which it had been mortgaged. Having no other means of making peace with the higher powers, he returned home

sorrowful and malcontent, complaining to his confidants, "that every mutation or change in the state had hitherto been productive of some sma' advantage to him in his ain quiet affairs; but that the present had (pize upon it!) cost him one of the best pen-feathers o' his wing."

Similar measures were threatened against others, who had profited by the wreck of the fortune of Ravenswood; and Sir William Ashton, in particular, was menaced with a parliamentary reversal of the judicial sentences under which he held the Castle and Barony of Ravenswood. With him, however, the Master, as well for Lucy's sake as on account of the hospitality he had received from him, felt himself under the necessity of proceeding with great candour. He wrote to the late Lord Keeper, for he no longer held that office, stating frankly the engagement which existed between him and Miss Ashton, requesting his permission for their union, and assuring him of his willingness to put the settlement of all matters between them upon such a footing, as Sir William himself should think favourable.

The same messenger was charged with a letter to Lady Ashton, deprecating any cause of displeasure which the Master might unintentionally have given her, enlarging upon his at-

achment to Miss Ashton, and the length to which it had proceeded, and conjuring the lady, as a Douglas in nature as well as in name, generously to forget ancient prejudices and misunderstandings; and to believe that the family had acquired a friend, and she herself a respectful and attached humble servant, in him who subscribed himself Edgar, Master of Ravenswood.

A third letter Ravenswood addressed to Lucy, and the messenger was instructed to find some secret and secure means of delivering it into her own hands. It contained the strongest protestations of continued affection, and dwelt upon the approaching change of the writer's fortunes as chiefly valuable, by tending to remove the impediments to their union. He related the steps he had taken to overcome the prejudices of her parents, and especially of her mother, and expressed his hope they might prove effectual. If not, he still trusted that his absence from Scotland upon an important and honourable mission might give time for prejudices to die away; while he hoped and trusted Miss Ashton's constancy, on which he had the most implicit reliance, would baffle any effort that might be used to divert her attachment. Much more there was, which, however interesting to the lovers themselves, would afford the reader neither interest nor information. To each of these

three letters the Master of Ravenswood received an answer, but by different means of conveyance, and certainly couched in very different styles.

Lady Ashton answered his letter by his own messenger, who was not allowed to remain at Ravenswood a moment longer than she was engaged in penning these lines. "For the hand of Mr Ravenswood of Wolf's Crag, these:

"SIR, UNKNOWN,

"I have received a letter, signed Edgar, Master of Ravenswood, concerning the writer whereof I am uncertain, seeing that the honours of such a family were forfeited for high treason in the person of Allan, late Lord Ravenswood. Sir, if you shall happen to be the person so subscribing yourself, you will please to know, that I claim the full interest of a parent in Miss Lucy Ashton, which I have disposed of irrevocably in behalf of a worthy person. And, sir, were this otherwise, I would not listen to a proposal from you, or any of your house, seeing their hand has been uniformly held up against the freedom of the subject, and the immunities of God's kirk. Sir, it is not a flightering blink of prosperity which can change my constant opinion

in this regard, seeing it has been my lot before now, like holy David, to see the wicked great in power, and flourishing like a green bay tree; nevertheless I passed, and they were not, and the place thereof knew them no more. Wishing you to lay these things to your heart for your own sake, so far as they may concern you, I pray you to take no farther notice of her, who desires to remain your unknown servant,

“MARGARET DOUGLAS,
otherwise ASHTON.”

About two days after he had received this very unsatisfactory epistle, the Master of Ravenswood, while walking up the High-street of Edinburgh, was jostled by a person, in whom, as the man pulled off his hat to make an apology, he recognized Lockhard, the confidential domestic of Sir William Ashton. The man bowed, slipped a letter into his hand, and disappeared. The packet contained four close-written folios, from which, however, as is sometimes incident to the compositions of great lawyers, little could be extracted, excepting that the writer felt himself in a very puzzling predicament.

Sir William spoke at length of his high value and regard for his dear young friend, the Mas-

ter of Ravenswood, and of his very extreme high value and regard for the Marquis of A ———, his very dear old friend; — he trusted that any measures that they might adopt, in which he was concerned, would be carried on with due regard to the sanctity of decreets, and judgments obtained *in fero contentioso*; protesting, before men and angels, that if the law of Scotland, as declared in her established courts, were to undergo a reversal in any popular assembly, the evils which would thence arise to the public, would inflict a greater wound upon his heart, than any loss he might himself sustain by such irregular proceedings. He flourished much on generosity and forgiveness of mutual injuries, and hinted at the mutability of human affairs, always favourite topics with the weaker party in politics. He pathetically lamented, and gently censured, the haste which had been used in depriving him of his situation of Lord Keeper, which his experience had enabled him to fill with some advantage to the public, without so much as giving him an opportunity of explaining how far his own views of general politics might essentially differ from those now in power. He was convinced the Marquis of A ——— had as sincere intentions towards the public, as himself or any man; and if, upon a conference, they could have agreed upon the measures by

which it was to be pursued, experience and his interest should have gone to support the present administration. Upon the engagement betwixt Ravenswood and his daughter, he spoke in a dry and confused manner. He regretted so premature a step as the engagement of the young people should have been taken, and conjured the Master to remember he had never given any encouragement thereunto; and observed, that, as a transaction *inter minores*, and without concurrence of his daughter's natural curators, the engagement was inept, and void in law. This precipitate measure, he added, had produced a very bad effect upon Lady Ashton's mind, which it was impossible at present to remove. Her son, Colonel Douglas Ashton, had embraced her prejudices in their fullest extent, and it was impossible for Sir William to adopt a course disagreeable to them, without a fatal and irreconcilable breach in his family; which was not at present to be thought of. Time, the great physician, he hoped would mend all.

In a postscript, Sir William said something more explicitly, that rather than the law of Scotland should sustain a severe wound through his sides, by a parliamentary reversal of the judgment of her supreme courts, in the case of the Barony of Ravenswood, he himself would extrajudicially consent to considerable sacrifices.

From Lucy Ashton, by some unknown conveyance, the Master received the following lines: — «I received your's, but it was at the utmost risk; do not attempt to write again till better times. I am sore beset, but I will be true to my word, while the exercise of my reason is vouchsafed to me. That you are happy and prosperous is some consolation, and my situation requires it all.” The note was signed L. A.

This letter filled Ravenswood with the most lively alarm. He made many attempts, notwithstanding her prohibition, to convey letters to Miss Ashton, and even to obtain an interview; but his attempts were frustrated, and he had only the mortification to learn that anxious and effectual precautions had been taken to prevent the possibility of their correspondence. The Master was more distressed by these circumstances, as it became impossible to delay his departure from Scotland, upon the important mission which had been confided to him. Before his departure, he put Sir William Ashton's letter into the hands of the Marquis of A — —, who observed with a smile, that Sir Williams's day of grace was past, and that he had now to learn which side of the hedge the sun had got to. It was with the greatest difficulty that Ravenswood extorted from the Marquis a promise, that he would compromise the proceedings in parliament,

providing Sir William should be disposed to acquiesce in a union between him and Lucy Ashton.

“I would hardly,” said the Marquis, “consent to your throwing away your birth-right in this manner, were I not perfectly confident that Lady Ashton, or Lady Douglas, or whatever she calls herself, will, as Scotchmen say, keep her threep; and that her husband dares not contradict her.”

“But yet,” said the Master, “I trust your Grace will consider my engagement as sacred.”

“Believe my word of honour,” said the Marquis, “I would be a friend even to your follies; and having thus told you *my* opinion, I will endeavour, as occasion offers, to serve you according to your own.”

The Master of Ravenswood could but thank his generous kinsman and patron, and leave him full power to act in all his affairs. He departed from Scotland upon his mission, which, it was supposed, might detain him upon the continent for some months.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Was ever woman in this humour wooed? —

Was ever woman in this humour won? —

I'll have her. —

Richard the Third.

TWELVE months had past away since the Master of Ravenswood's departure for the continent, and, although his return to Scotland had been expected in a much shorter space, yet the affairs of his mission, or, according to a prevailing report, others of a nature personal to himself, still detained him abroad. In the mean time, the altered state of affairs in Sir William Ashton's family may be gathered from the following conversation which took place betwixt Bucklaw and his confidential bottle-companion and dependent, the noted Captain Craigengelt.

They were seated on either side of the huge sepulchral-looking freestone chimney in the low hall at Girnington. A wood fire blazed merrily in the grate; a round oaken table, placed between them, supported a stoup of excellent claret, two rummer glasses, and other good cheer; and yet, with all these appliances and means to boot, the countenance of the patron was dubious, doubtful, and unsatisfied, while the invention of his dependent was taxed to the utmost, to parry what he most dreaded, a fit, as he called it, of the sullens on the part of his protector. After a long pause, only interrupted by the devil's tatoo, which Bucklaw kept beating against the hearth with the toe of his boot, Craigengelt at last ventured to break silence. "May I be double distanced," said he, "if ever I saw a man in my life have less the air of a bridegroom! Cut me out of feather, if you have not more the look of a man condemned to be hanged."

"My kind thanks for the compliment," replied Bucklaw; "but I suppose you think upon the predicament in which you yourself are most likely to be placed; — and pray, Captain Craigengelt, if it please your worship, why should I look merry, when I'm sad, and devilish sad too?"

"And that's what vexes me," said Craigengelt.

«Here is this match, the best in the whole country, and which you were so anxious about, is on the point of being concluded, and you are as sulky as a bear that's lost its whelps.»

«I do not know,» answered the laird, doggedly, «whether I should conclude it or not, if it was not that I am too far forwards so leap back.»

«Leap back!» exclaimed Craigengelt, with a well-assumed air of astonishment, «that would be playing the back-game with a witness! Leap back! Why, is not the girl's fortune»——

«The young lady's, if you please,» said Haystone, interrupting him.

«Well, well, no disrespect meant — Will Miss Ashton's tocher not weigh against any in Lothian?»

«Granted,» answered Bucklaw; «but I care not a penny for her tocher, I have enough of my own.»

«And the mother, that loves you like her own child?»

«Better than some of her children, I believe,» said Bucklaw, «or there would be little love wared on the matter.»

«And Colonel Sholto Douglas Ashton, who desires the match above all earthly things?»

“Because,” said Bucklaw, “he expects to carry the county of —— through my interest.”

“And the father, who is as keen to see the match concluded, as ever I have been to win a main?”

“Aye,” said Bucklaw, in the same disparaging manner, “it lies with Sir William’s policy to secure the next best match, since he cannot barter his child to save the great Ravenswood estate, which Parliament are about to wrench out of his clutches.”

“What say you to the young lady herself?” said Craigengelt; “the finest young woman in all Scotland, one that you used to be so fond of when she was cross, and now she consents to have you, and gives up her engagement with Ravenswood, you are for jibbing — I must say, the devil’s in ye, when ye neither know what you would have, nor what you would want.”

“I’ll tell you my meaning in a word,” answered Bucklaw, getting up and walking through the room; “I want to know what the devil is the cause of Miss Ashton’s changing her mind so suddenly.”

“And what need you care,” said Craigengelt, “since the change is in your favour?”

“I’ll tell you what it is,” returned his patron, “I never knew much of that sort of fine ladies,

and I believe they may be as capricious as the devil; but there is something in Miss Ashton's change, a devilish deal too sudden, and too serious for a mere flisk of her own. I'll be bound Lady Ashton understands every machine for breaking in the human mind, and there are as many as there are cannon-bits, martingals, and cavessons for young colts."

"And if that were not the case," said Craigengelt, "how the devil should we ever get them into training at all?"

"And that's true too," said Bucklaw, suspending his march through the diningroom, and leaning upon the back of a chair. — "And besides, here's Ravenswood in the way still; do you think he'll give up Lucy's engagement?"

"To be sure he will," answered Craigengelt; "what good can it do him to refuse, since he wishes to marry another woman, and she another man?"

"And you believe seriously," said Bucklaw, "that he is going to marry the foreign lady we heard of?"

"You heard yourself," answered Craigengelt, "what Captain Westenho said about it, and the great preparation made for their blythsome bridal."

“Captain Westenho,” replied Bucklaw, “has rather too much of your own cast about him, Craigy, to make what Sir William would call a ‘famous witness.’ He drinks deep, plays deep, swears deep, and I suspect can lie and cheat a little into the bargain. Useful qualities, Craigy, if kept in their proper sphere, but which have a little too much of the freebooter to make a figure in a court of evidence.”

“Well then,” said Craigengelt, “will you believe Colonel Douglas Ashton, who heard the Marquis of A —— say in a public circle, but not aware that he was within ear-shot, that his kinsman had made a better arrangement for himself than to give his father’s land for the pale-cheeked daughter of a broken-down fanatic, and that Bucklaw was welcome to the wearing of Ravenswood’s shaughled shoes.”

“Did he say so, by heavens!” cried Bucklaw, breaking out into one of those incontrollable fits of passion to which he was constitutionally subject; — “if I had heard him, I would have tore the tongue out of his throat before all his peats and minions, and Highland bullies into the bargain. Why did not Ashton run him through the body?”

“Capote me if I know,” said the Captain. “He deserved it sure enough, but he is an old man,

and a minister of state, and there would be more risk than credit in meddling with him. You had more need to think of making up to Miss Lucy Ashton the disgrace that's like to fall upon her, than of interfering with a man too old to fight, and on too high a stool for your hand to reach him."

"It *shall* reach him though one day," said Bucklaw, "and his kinsman Ravenswood to boot. In the mean time, I'll take care Miss Ashton receives no discredit for the slight they have put upon her. It's an awkward job, however, and I wish it was ended; I scarce know how to talk to her, — but fill a bumper, Craigy, and we'll drink her health. It grows late, and a night-cowl of good claret is worth all the considering caps in Europe."

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was the copy of our conference.

In bed she slept not, for my urging it;

At board she fed not, for my urging it;

Alone, it was the subject of my theme;

In company, I often glanced at it.

Comedy of Errors.

THE next morning saw Bucklaw, and his faithful Achates, Craigengelt, at Ravenswood Castle. They were most courteously received by the knight and his lady, as well as by their son and heir, Colonel Ashton. After a good deal of stammering and blushing, — for Bucklaw, notwithstanding his audacity in other matters, had all the sheepish bashfulness common to those who have lived little in respectable society, — he contrived at length to explain his wish to be admitted to a conference with Miss Ashton upon

the subject of their approaching union. Sir William and his son looked at Lady Ashton, who replied with the greatest composure, "that Lucy would wait upon Mr Haystone directly. I hope," she added with a smile, "that as Lucy is very young, and has been lately trepanned into an engagement, of which she is now heartily ashamed, our dear Bucklaw will excuse her wish, that I should be present at their interview?"

"In truth, my dear lady," said Bucklaw, "it is the very thing that I would have desired on my own account; for I have been so little accustomed to what is called gallantry, that I shall certainly fall into some cursed mistake, unless I have the advantage of your ladyship as an interpreter."

It was thus that Bucklaw, in the perturbation of his embarrassment upon this critical occasion, forgot the just apprehensions he had entertained of Lady Ashton's overbearing ascendancy over her daughter's mind, and lost an opportunity of ascertaining, by his own investigation, the real state of Lucy's feelings.

The other gentlemen left the room, and in a short time, Lady Ashton, followed by her daughter, entered the apartment. She appeared, as he had seen her on former occasions, rather composed than agitated; but a nicer judge than

he could scarce have determined, whether her calmness was that of despair, or of indifference. Bucklaw was too much agitated by his own feelings minutely to scrutinise those of the lady. He stammered out an unconnected address, confounding together the two or three topics to which it related, and stopt short before he brought it to any regular conclusion. Miss Ashton listened, or looked as if she listened, but returned not a single word in answer, continuing to fix her eyes on a small piece of embroidery, on which, as if by instinct or habit, her fingers were busily employed. Lady Ashton sat at some distance, almost screened from notice by the deep embrasure of the window in which she had placed her chair. From this she whispered in a tone of voice, which, though soft and sweet, had something in it of admonition, if not command, — "Lucy, my dear, remember — have you heard what Bucklaw has been saying?"

The idea of her mother's presence seemed to have slipped from the unhappy girl's recollection. She started, dropped her needle, and repeated hastily, and almost in the same breath, the contradictory answers, "Yes, madam — no, my lady — I beg pardon — I did not hear."

"You need not blush, my love, and still less need you look so pale and frightened," said La-

dy Ashton, coming forward; "we know that maidens' ears must be slow in receiving a gentleman's language; but you must remember Mr Haystone speaks on a subject on which you have long since agreed to give him a favourable hearing. You know how much your father and I have our hearts set upon an event so desirable."

In Lady Ashton's voice, a tone of impressive, and even stern inuendo was sedulously and skilfully concealed, under an appearance of the most affectionate maternal tenderness. The manner was for Bucklaw, who was easily enough imposed upon; the matter of the exhortation was for the terrified Lucy, who well knew how to interpret her mother's hints, however skilfully their real purport might be veiled from general observation.

Miss Ashton sat upright in her chair, cast round her a glance, in which fear was mingled with a still wilder expression, but remained perfectly silent. Bucklaw, who had in the meantime paced the room to and fro, until he had recovered his composure, now stopped within two or three yards of her chair, and broke out as follows: — "I believe I have been a d — d fool, Miss Ashton; I have tried to speak to you as people tell me young ladies like to be talked to, and I don't think you comprehend what I

have been saying; and no wonder, for d — n me if I understand it myself! But, however, once for all, and in broad Scotch, your father and mother like what is proposed, and if you can take a plain young fellow for your husband, who will never cross you in any thing you have a mind to, I will place you at the head of the best establishment in the three Lothians; you shall have Lady Girnington's lodging in the Canongate of Edinburgh, go where you please, do what you please, and see what you please, and that's fair. Only I must have a corner at the board end for a worthless old play-fellow of mine, whose company I would rather want than have, if it were not that the d — d fellow has persuaded me that I can't do without him; and so I hope you won't except against Craigy, although it might be easy to find much better company."

"Now, out upon you, Bucklaw," said Lady Ashton, again interposing, — "how can you think Lucy can have any objection to that blunt, honest, good-natured creature, Captain Craigengelt?"

"Why, madam," replied Bucklaw, "as to Craigy's sincerity, honesty, and good-nature, they are, I believe, pretty much upon a par — but, that's neither here nor there — the fellow

knows my ways, and has got useful to me, and I cannot well do without him, as I said before. But all this is nothing to the purpose; for, since I have mustered up courage to make a plain proposal, I would fain hear Miss Ashton, from her own lips, give me a plain answer."

"My dear Bucklaw," said Lady Ashton, "let me spare Lucy's bashfulness. I tell you, in her presence, that she has already consented to be guided by her father and me in this matter. — Lucy, my love," she added, with that singular combination of suavity of tone and pointed energy which we have already noticed — "Lucy, my dearest love! speak for yourself, is it not as I say?"

Her victim answered in a tremulous and hollow voice — "I *have* promised to obey you, — but upon one condition."

"She means," said Lady Ashton, turning to Bucklaw, "she expects an answer to the demand which she has made upon the man at Vienna, or Ratisbon, or Paris, — or where is he — the restitution of the engagement in which he had the art to involve her. You will not, I am sure, my dear friend, think it is wrong that she should feel much delicacy upon this head; indeed, it concerns us all."

“Perfectly right — quite fair,” said Bucklaw, half humming, half speaking the end of the old song —

‘It is best to be off wi’ the old love
Before you be on wi’ the new.’

“But I thought,” said he, pausing, “you might have had an answer six times told from Ravenswood. D — n me if I have not a mind to go and fetch one myself, if Miss Ashton will honour me with the commission.”

“By no means,” said Lady Ashton, “we have had the utmost difficulty of preventing Douglas, (for whom it would be more proper,) from taking so rash a step; and do you think we could permit you, my good friend, almost equally dear to us, to go to a desperate man upon an errand so desperate? In fact, all the friends of the family are of opinion, and my dear Lucy herself ought so to think, that, as this unworthy person has returned no answer to her letter, silence must on this, as in other cases, be held to give consent, and a contract must be supposed to be given up, when the party waives insisting upon it. Sir William, who should know best, is clear upon this subject; and therefore, my dear Lucy — —

„Madam,” said Lucy, with unwonted energy, „urge me no farther — if this unhappy engagement be restored, I have already said you shall dispose of me as you will — till then I should commit a heavy sin in the sight of God and man, in doing what you require.”

„But, my love, if this man remains obstinately silent ” ——

„He will *not* be silent,” answered Lucy; „it is six weeks since I sent him a double of my former letter by a sure hand.”

„You have not — you could not — you durst not,” said Lady Ashton, with violence inconsistent with the tone she had intended to assume; but, instantly correcting herself, „my dearest Lucy,” said she, in her sweetest tone of expostulation, „how could you think of such a thing?”

„No matter,” said Bucklaw; „I respect Miss Ashton for her sentiments, and I only wish I had been her messenger myself.”

„And pray how long, Miss Ashton,” said her mother ironically, „are we to wait the return of your Pacolet — your fairy messenger — since our humble couriers of flesh and blood could not be trusted in this matter?”

"I have numbered weeks, days, hours, and minutes," said Miss Ashton; "within another week I shall have an answer, unless he is dead. Till that time, sir," she said, addressing Bucklaw, "let me be thus far beholden to you, that you will beg my mother to forbear me upon this subject."

"I will make it my particular entreaty to Lady Ashton," said Bucklaw, "by my honour, madam, I respect your feelings, and although the prosecution of this affair be rendered dearer to me than ever, yet, as I am a gentleman, I would renounce it, were it so urged as to give you a moment's pain."

"Mr Hayston, I think, cannot apprehend that," said Lady Ashton, looking pale with anger, "when the daughter's happiness lies in the bosom of the mother. Let me ask you, Miss Ashton, in what terms your last letter was couched?"

"Exactly in the same, madam," answered Lucy, "which you dictated on a former occasion."

"When eight days have elapsed then," said her mother, resuming her tone of tenderness, "we shall hope, my dearest love, that you will end this suspense."

"Miss Ashton must not be hurried, madam," said Bucklaw, whose bluntness of feeling did

not by any means arise from want of good-nature — «messengers may be stopped or delayed. I have known a day's journey broke by the casting off a fore-shoe — Stay, let me see my calendar — the 20th day from this is St Jude's, and the day before I must be at Caverton Edge to see the match between the Laird of Kittle-girth's black mare, and Johnston the meal-monger's four-year old colt; but I can ride all night, or Craigy can bring me word how the match goes; and I hope, in the mean time, as I shall not myself distress Miss Ashton with any further importunity, that your ladyship yourself, and Sir William, and Colonel Douglas, will have the goodness to allow her uninterrupted time for making up her mind.»

«Sir,» said Miss Ashton, «you are generous.»

«As for that, madam,» answered Bucklaw, «I only pretend to be a plain good-humoured young fellow, as I said before, who will willingly make you happy if you will permit him, and shew him how to do so.»

Having said this, he saluted her with more emotion than was consistent with his usual train of feeling, and took his leave; Lady Ashton, as she accompanied him out of the apartment, assuring him, that her daughter did full justice to the sincerity of his attachment, and request-

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ing him to see Sir William before his departure, "since," as she said, with a glance reverting towards Lucy, "against St Jude's day, we must all be ready to *sign and seal*."

"To sign and seal!" echoed Lucy in a muttering tone, as the door of the apartment closed — "To sign and seal — to do and die!" and clasping her extenuated hands together, she sunk back on the easy chair she occupied, in a state resembling stupor.

From this she was shortly after awakened by the boisterous entry of her brother Henry, who clamorously reminded her of a promise to give him two yards of carnation ribbon to make knots to his new garters. With the most patient composure Lucy arose, and, opening a little ivory-cabinet, sought out the ribbon the lad wanted, measured it accurately, cut it off into proper lengths, and knotted it into the fashion his boyish whim required.

"Dinna shut the cabinet yet," said Henry, "for I must have some of your silver-wire to fasten the bells to my hawk's jesses, and yet the new falcon's not worth them neither; for do you know, after all the plague we had to get her from an eyery, all the way at Posso, in Mannor Water, she's going to prove, after all, nothing better than a rifler — she just wets her

singles in the blood of the partridge, and then breaks away, and lets her fly; and what good can the poor bird do after that, you know, except pine and die in the first heather-cow or whin-bush she can crawl into?"

"Right, Henry — right, very right, said Lucy, mournfully, holding the boy fast by the hand, after she had given him the wire that he wanted; "but there are more riflers in the world than your falcon, and more wounded birds that seek but to die in quiet, than can find neither brake nor whin-bush to hide their heads in."

"Ah! that's some speech out of your romances," said the boy; "and Sholto says they have turned your head; but I hear Norman whistling to the hawk — I must go fasten on the jesses."

And he scampered away with the thoughtless gaiety of boyhood, leaving his sister to the bitterness of her own reflections.

"It is decreed," she said, "that every living creature, even those who owe me most kindness, are to shun me, and leave me to those by whom I am beset. It is just it should be thus — alone and uncounselled, I involved myself in these perils — alone and uncounselled, I must extricate myself or die."

CHAPTER XXX.

————— *what doth ensue*

*But moody and dull melancholy,
Kinsman to grim, and comfortless despair,
And at her heels a huge infectious troop
Of pale distemperatures and foes to life.*

Comedy of Errors.

—————

As some vindication of the ease with which Bucklaw, (who otherwise, as he termed himself, was really a very good-humoured fellow,) resigned his judgment to the management of Lady Ashton, while paying his addresses to her daughter, the reader must call to mind the strict domestic discipline, which, at this period, was exercised over the females of a Scottish family.

The manners of the country in this, as in many other respects, coincided with those of France before the revolution. Young women of

the higher ranks seldom mingled in society until after marriage, and, both in law and fact, were held to be under the strict tutelage of their parents, who were too apt to enforce the views for their settlement in life, without paying any regard to the inclination of the parties chiefly interested. On such occasions, the suitor expected little more from his bride than a silent acquiescence in the will of her parents; and as few opportunities of acquaintance, far less of intimacy, occurred, he made his choice by the outside, as the lovers in the Merchant of Venice select the casket, contented to trust to chance the issue of the lottery, in which he had hazarded a venture.

It was not therefore surprising, such being the general manners of the age, that Mr Hayston of Bucklaw, whom dissipated habits had detached from good society, should not attend particularly to those feelings in his elected bride, to which many men of more sentiment, experience, and reflection, would, in all probability, have been equally indifferent. He knew what all accounted the principal point, that her parents and friends, namely, were decidedly in his favour, and that there existed most powerful reasons for their predilection.

In truth, the conduct of the Marquis of A —, since Ravenswood's departure, had been such

as almost to bar the possibility of his kinsman's union with Lucy Ashton. The Marquis was Ravenswood's sincere, but misjudging friend; or rather, like many friends and patrons, he consulted what he considered to be his relation's true interest, although he knew that in doing so he run counter to his inclinations.

The Marquis drove on, therefore, with the plenitude of ministerial authority, an appeal in the Scottish Parliament against those judgments of the courts of law, by which Sir William became possessed of Ravenswood's hereditary property. As this measure was enforced with all the authority of power, it was exclaimed against by the members on the opposite side, as an interference with the civil judicature of the country, equally new, arbitrary, and tyrannical. And if it thus affected even strangers connected with them only by political party, it may be guessed what the Ashton family themselves said and thought under so cross a dispensation. Sir William, still more worldly-minded than he was timid, was reduced to despair by the loss by which he was threatened. His son's haughtier spirit was exalted into rage, at the idea of being deprived of his expected patrimony. But to Lady Ashton's yet more vindictive temper, the conduct of Ravenswood, or rather of his patron, appeared to be an offence challenging the deep-

est and most immortal revenge. Even the quiet and confiding temper of Lucy herself, swayed by the opinions expressed by all around her, could not but consider the conduct of Ravenswood as precipitate, and even unkind. "It was my father," she repeated with a sigh, "who welcomed him to this place, and encouraged, or at least allowed, the intimacy between us. Should he not have remembered this, and requited it with at least some moderate degree of procrastination in the assertion of his own alleged rights? I would have forfeited for him double the value of these lands, which he pursues with an ardour that shows he has forgotten how much I am implicated in the matter."

Lucy, however, could only murmur these things to herself, unwilling to increase the prejudices against her lover entertained by all around her, who exclaimed against the steps pursued on his account, as illegal, vexatious, and tyrannical, resembling the worst measures in the worst times of the worst Stuarts. As a natural consequence, every means was resorted to, and every argument urged, to induce her to break off her engagement with Ravenswood, as being scandalous, shameful, and sinful, formed with the mortal enemy of her family, and calculated to add bitterness to the distress of her parents.

Lucy's spirit, however, was high; and although unaided and alone, she could have borne much — she could have endured the repinings of her father — his murmurs against what he called the tyrannical usage of the ruling party — his ceaseless charges of ingratitude against Ravenswood — his endless lectures on the various means by which contracts may be voided and annulled — his quotations from the civil, the municipal, and the canon law — and his prelections upon the *patria potestas*.

She might have borne also in patience, or repelled with scorn, the bitter taunts and occasional violence of her brother Colonel Ashton, and the impertinent and intrusive interference of other friends and relations. But it was beyond her power effectually to withstand or elude the constant and unceasing persecution of Lady Ashton, who, laying every other wish aside, had bent the whole efforts of her powerful mind to break her daughter's contract with Ravenswood, and to place a perpetual bar between the lovers, by effecting Lucy's union with Bucklaw. Far more deeply skilled than her husband in the recesses of the human heart, she was aware, that in this way she might strike a blow of deep and decisive vengeance upon one, whom she esteemed as her mortal enemy; nor did she hesitate at raising her arm, although she knew that

the wound must be dealt through the bosom of her daughter. With this stern and fixed purpose, she sounded every depth and shallow of her daughter's soul, assumed alternately every disguise of manner which could serve her purpose, and prepared at leisure every species of dire machinery, by which the human mind can be wrenched from its settled purpose. Some of these were of an obvious description, and require only to be cursorily mentioned; others were characteristic of the time, the country, and the persons engaged in this singular drama.

It was of the last consequence, that all intercourse betwixt the lovers should be stopped, and, by dint of gold and authority, Lady Ashton contrived to possess herself of such a complete command of all who were placed around her daughter, that, in fact, no leaguered fortress was ever more completely blockaded; while, at the same time, to all outward appearance, Miss Ashton lay under no restriction. The verge of her parents' domains became, in respect to her, like the viewless and enchanted line drawn around a fairy castle, where nothing unpermitted can either enter from without, or escape from within. Thus every letter, in which Ravenswood conveyed to Lucy Ashton the indispensable reasons which detained him abroad, and more than one note which poor Lucy had

addressed to him through what she thought a secure channel, fell into the hands of her mother. It could not be, but what the tenor of these intercepted letters, especially those of Ravenswood, should contain something to irritate the passions, and fortify the obstinacy, of her into whose hands they fell; but Lady Ashton's passions were too deep-rooted to require this fresh food. She burnt the papers as regularly as she perused them; and as they consumed into vapour and tinder, regarded them with a smile upon her compressed lips, and an exultation in her steady eye, which showed her confidence that the hopes of the writers should soon be rendered equally unsubstantial.

It usually happens that fortune aids the machinations of those who are prompt to avail themselves of every chance that offers. A report was wafted from the continent, founded, like others of the same sort, upon many plausible circumstances, but without any real basis, stating the Master of Ravenswood to be on the eve of marriage with a foreign lady of fortune and distinction. This was greedily caught up by both the political parties, who were at once struggling for power and for popular favour, and who seized, as usual, upon the most private circumstances in the lives of each other's partizans to convert them into subjects of political discussion.

The Marquis of A — — gave his opinion aloud and publicly, not indeed in the coarse terms ascribed to him by Captain Craigengelt, but in a manner sufficiently offensive to the Ashtons. "He thought the report," he said, "highly probable, and heartily wished it might be true. Such a match was fitter and far more creditable for a spirited young fellow, than a marriage with the daughter of an old whig lawyer, whose chicanery had so nearly ruined his father."

The other party, of course, laying out of view the opposition which the Master of Ravenswood received from Miss Ashton's family, cried shame upon his fickleness and perfidy, as if he had seduced the young lady into an engagement, and wilfully and causelessly abandoned her for another.

Sufficient care was taken that this report should find its way to Ravenswood Castle through every various channel, Lady Ashton being well aware, that the very reiteration of the same rumour from so many quarters could not but give it a semblance of truth. By some it was told as a piece of ordinary news, by some communicated as serious intelligence; now it was whispered to Lucy Ashton's ear in the tone of malignant pleasantry, and now transmitted to her as a matter of grave and serious warning.

Even the boy Henry was made the instrument of adding to his sister's torments. One morning he rushed into the room with a willow branch in his hand, which he told her had arrived that instant from Germany for her special wearing. Lucy, as we have seen, was remarkably fond of her younger brother, and at that moment his wanton and thoughtless unkindness seemed more keenly injurious than even the studied insults of her elder brother. Her grief, however, had no shade of resentment; she folded her arms about the boy's neck, and saying faintly, "Poor Henry! you speak but what they tell you," she burst into a flood of unrestrained tears. The boy was moved, notwithstanding the thoughtlessness of his age and character. "The devil take me," said he, "Lucy, if I fetch you any more of these tormenting messages again; for I like you better," said he, kissing away the tears, "than the whole pack of them; and you shall have my grey poney to ride on, and you shall canter him if you like, aye, and ride beyond the village too if you have a mind."

"Who told you," said Lucy, "that I am not permitted to ride where I please?"

"That's a secret," said the boy; "but you will find you can never ride beyond the village but your horse will cast a shoe, or fall lame, or the

castle bell will ring, or something will happen to bring you back. But if I tell you more of these things, Douglas will not get me the pair of colours they have promised me, and so good morrow to you."

This dialogue plunged Lucy in still deeper dejection, as it tended to shew her plainly, what she had for some time suspected, that she was little better than a prisoner at large in her father's house. We have described her in the outset of our story as of a romantic disposition, delighting in tales of love and wonder, and readily identifying herself with the situation of those legendary heroines, with whose adventures, for want of better reading, her memory had become stocked. The fairy wand, with which in her solitude she had delighted to raise visions of enchantment, became now the rod of a magician, the bond slave of evil genii, serving only to invoke spectres at which the exorcist trembled. She felt herself the object of suspicion, of scorn, of dislike at least, if not of hatred, to her own family; and it seemed to her that she was abandoned by the very person on whose account she was exposed to the enmity of all around her. Indeed the evidence of Ravenswood's infidelity began to assume every day a more determined character.

[A soldier of fortune of the name of Westen-

ho, an old familiar of Craigengelt's, chanced to arrive from abroad about this time. The worthy Captain, though without any precise communication with Lady Ashton, always acted most regularly and sedulously in support of her plans, and easily prevailed upon his friend, by dint of exaggeration of real circumstances, and coining of others, to give explicit testimony to the truth of Ravenswood's approaching marriage.

Thus beset on all hands, and in a manner reduced to despair, Lucy's temper gave way under the pressure of constant affliction and persecution. She became gloomy and abstracted, and, contrary to her natural and ordinary habit of mind, sometimes turned with spirit and even fierceness on those by whom she was long and closely annoyed. Her health also began to be shaken, and her hectic cheek and wandering eye gave symptoms of what is called a fever upon the spirits. In most mothers this would have moved compassion, but Lady Ashton, compact and firm of purpose, saw these waverings of health and intellect with no greater sympathy than that with which the hostile engineer regards the towers of a beleaguered city as they reel under the discharge of his artillery, or rather she considered these starts and inequalities of temper as symptoms of Lucy's expiring resolution; as the

angler, by the throws and convulsive exertions of the fish which he has hooked, becomes aware that he soon will be able to land him. To accelerate the catastrophe in the present case, Lady Ashton had recourse to an expedient very consistent with the temper and credulity of those times, but which the reader will probably pronounce truly diabolical.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“In which a witch did dwell, in loathly weeds,
And wilful want, all careless of her needs;
So chusing solitary to abide,
Far from all neighbours, that her devilish
deeds
And hellish arts from people she might hide,
And hurt far off, unknown, whomever she
envied.”

Fairy Queen.

THE health of Lucy Ashton soon required the assistance of a person more skilled in the office of a sick nurse than the female domestics of the family. Ailsie Gourlay, sometimes called the Wise Woman of Bowden, was the person whom, for her own strong reasons, Lady Ashton selected as an attendant upon her daughter.

This woman had acquired a considerable reputation among the ignorant by the pretended

cures which she performed, especially in *on-comes*, as the Scotch call them, or mysterious diseases which baffle the regular physician. Her pharmacopeia consisted partly of herbs selected in planetary hours, partly of words, signs, and charms, which sometimes, perhaps, produced a favourable influence upon the imagination of her patients. Such was the avowed profession of Lucky Gourlay, which, as may well be supposed, was looked upon with a suspicious eye, not only by her neighbours, but even by the clergy of the district. In private, however, she traded more deeply in the occult sciences; for, notwithstanding the dreadful punishments inflicted upon the supposed crime of witchcraft, there wanted not those who, steeled by want and bitterness of spirit, were willing to adopt the hateful and dangerous character, for the sake of the influence which its terrors enabled them to exercise in the vicinity, and the wretched emolument which they could extract by the practice of their supposed art.

Ailsie Gourlay was not indeed fool enough to acknowledge a compact with the Evil One, which would have been a swift and ready road to the stake and tar-barrel. Her fairy, she said, like Caliban's, was a harmless fairy. Nevertheless, she "spaed fortunes," read dreams, composed philtres, discovered stolen goods, and made and

dissolved matches as successfully as if, according to the belief of the whole neighbourhood, she had been aided in these arts by Beelzebub himself. The worst of the pretenders to these sciences was, that they were generally persons who, feeling themselves odious to humanity, were careless of what they did to deserve the public hatred. Real crimes were often committed under pretence of magical imposture; and it somewhat relieves the disgust with which we read, in the criminal records, the conviction of these wretches, to be aware that many of them merit, as poisoners, suborners, and diabolical agents in secret domestic crimes, the severe fate to which they were condemned for the imaginary guilt of witchcraft.

Such was Ailsey Gourlay, whom, in order to attain the absolute subjugation of Lucy Ashton's mind, her mother thought it fitting to place near her person. A woman of less consequence than Lady Ashton had not dared to take such a step; but her high rank and strength of character set her above the censure of the world, and she was allowed to have selected for her daughter's attendant the best and most experienced sick nurse "and mediciner" in the neighbourhood, where an inferior person would have fallen under the reproach of calling in the assistance of a partner and ally of the great enemy of mankind.

The beldame caught her cue readily and by inuendo, without giving Lady Ashton the pain of distinct explanation. She was in many respects qualified for the part she played, which indeed could not be efficiently assumed without some knowledge of the human heart and passions. Dame Gourlay perceived that Lucy shuddered at her external appearance, which we have already described upon her appearance in the death-chamber of blind Alice; and while internally she hated the poor girl for the involuntary horror with which she perceived she was regarded, she commenced her operations by endeavouring to efface or overcome those prejudices which in her heart she resented as mortal offences. This was easily done, for the hag's external ugliness was soon balanced by a show of kindness and interest, to which Lucy had of late been little accustomed; her attentive services and real skill gained her the ear, if not the confidence, of her patient; and under pretence of diverting the solitude of a sick room, she soon led her attention captive by the legends in which she was well skilled, and to which Lucy's habits of reading and reflection induced her to "lend an attentive ear." Dame Gourlay's tales were at first of a mild and interesting character —

Of fays that nightly dance upon the wold,
And lovers doomed to wander and to weep,
And castles high, where wicked wizzards keep
Their captive thralls.

Gradually, however, they assumed a darker and more mysterious character, and became such as, told by the midnight lamp, and enforced by the tremulous tone, the quivering and livid lip, the uplifted skinny fore-finger, and the shaking head of the ugly blue-eyed hag, might have appalled a less credulous imagination, in an age more hard of belief. The old Sycorax saw her advantage, and gradually narrowed her magic circle around the devoted victim on whose spirit she practised. Her legends began to relate to the fortunes of the Ravenswood family, whose ancient grandeur and portentous authority, credulity had graced with so many superstitious attributes. The story of the fatal fountain was narrated at full length, and with formidable additions, by the ancient sybil. The prophecy, quoted by Caleb, concerning the dead bride, who was to be won by the last of the Ravenswoods, had its own mysterious commentary; and the singular circumstance of the apparition, seen by the Master of Ravenswood in the forest, having partly transpired through his hasty enqui-

ries in the cottage of old Alice, formed a theme for many exaggerations.

Lucy might have despised these tales, if they had been related concerning another family, or if her own situation had been less despondent. But circumstanced as she was, the idea that an evil fate hung over her attachment, became predominant over her other feelings, and the gloom of superstition darkened a mind, already sufficiently weakened by sorrow, distress, uncertainty, and an oppressive sense of desertion and desolation. Stories were told by her attendant so closely resembling her own in their circumstances, that she was gradually led to converse upon such tragic and mystical subjects with the bel-dame, and to repose a sort of confidence in the sybil, whom she still regarded with involuntary shuddering. Dame Gourlay knew how to avail herself of this imperfect confidence. She directed Lucy's thoughts to the means of enquiring into futurity, — the surest mode, perhaps, of shaking the understanding and destroying the spirits. Omens were expounded, dreams were interpreted, and other tricks of jugglery perhaps resorted to, by which the pretended adepts of the period deceived and fascinated their deluded followers. I find it mentioned in the articles of dittay against Ailsie Gourlay, (—— for it is some comfort to think that the old hag was tried,

condemned, and burned on the top of North-Berwick-Law, by sentence of a commission from the Privy Council) — I find, I say, it was charged against her, among other offences, that she had, by the aid and delusions of Satan, shewn to a young person of quality, in a mirror glass, a gentleman then abroad, to whom the said young person was betrothed, and who appeared in the vision to be in the act of bestowing his hand upon another lady. But this and some other parts of the record appeared to have been studiously left imperfect in names and dates, probably out of regard to the honour of the families concerned. If Dame Gourlay was able actually to play off such a piece of jugglery, it is clear she must have had better assistance to practise the deception, than her own skill or funds could supply. Meanwhile this mysterious visionary traffic had its usual effect, in unsettling Miss Ashton's mind. Her temper became unequal, her health decayed daily, her manners grew moping, melancholy, and uncertain. Her father, guessing partly at the cause of these appearances, and exerting a degree of authority unusual with him, made a point of banishing Dame Gourlay from the castle; but the arrow was shot, and was rankling barb-deep in the side of the wounded deer.

It was shortly after the departure of this wo-

man, that Lucy Ashton, urged by her parents, announced to them, with a vivacity by which they were startled, "that she was conscious heaven and earth and hell had set themselves against her union with Ravenswood; still her contract," she said, "was a binding contract, and she neither would nor could resign it without the consent of Ravenswood. Let me be assured," she concluded, "that he will free me from my engagement, and dispose of me as you please, I care not how. When the diamonds are gone, what signifies the casket?"

The tone of obstinacy with which this was said, her eyes flashing with unnatural light, and her hands firmly clenched, precluded the possibility of dispute; and the utmost length which Lady Ashton's art could attain, only got her the privilege of dictating the letter, by which her daughter required to know of Ravenswood whether he intended to abide by, or to surrender, what she termed, "their unfortunate engagement." Of this advantage Lady Ashton so far and so ingeniously availed herself, that, according to the wording of the letter, the reader would have supposed Lucy was calling upon her lover to renounce a contract which was contrary to the interests and inclinations of both. Not trusting even to this point of deception, Lady Ashton finally determined to suppress the

letter altogether, in hopes that Lucy's impatience would induce her to condemn Ravenswood unheard and in absence. In this she was disappointed. The time, indeed, had long elapsed, when an answer should have been received from the continent. The faint ray of hope which still glimmered in Lucy's mind, was well nigh extinguished. But the idea never forsook her, that her letter might not have been duly forwarded. One of her mother's new machinations unexpectedly furnished her with the means of ascertaining what she most desired to know.

The female agent of hell having been dismissed from the castle, Lady Ashton, who wrought by all variety of means, resolved to employ, for working the same end on Lucy's mind, an agent of a very different character. This was no other than the Reverend Mr Bide-the-bent, a presbyterian clergyman, of the very strictest order and most rigid principles, whose aid she called in upon the principle of the tyrant in the tragedy: —

«I'll have a priest shall preach her from her
faith,

And make it sin not to renounce that vow,
Which I'd have broken ——”

But Lady Ashton was mistaken in the agent she had selected. His prejudices, indeed, were easily enlisted on her side, and it was no difficult matter to make him regard with horror the prospect of a union betwixt the daughter of a God-fearing, professing, and presbyterian family of distinction, with the heir of a blood-thirsty prelatist and persecutor, the hands of whose fathers had been dyed to the wrists in the blood of God's saints. This resembled, in the divine's opinion, the union of a Moabitish stranger with a daughter of Zion. But with all the more severe prejudices and principles of his sect, Bide the-bent possessed a sound judgment, and had learnt sympathy even in that very school of persecution, where the heart is so frequently hardened. In a private interview with Miss Ashton, he was deeply moved by her distress, and could not but admit the justice of her request to be permitted a direct communication with Ravenswood, upon the subject of their solemn contract. When she urged to him the great uncertainty under which she laboured, whether her letter had been ever forwarded, the old man paced the room with long steps, shook his grey head, rested repeatedly for a space on his ivory-headed staff, and after much hesitation, confessed that he thought her doubts so reasonable, that he would himself aid in the removal of them.

“I cannot but opine, Miss Lucy,” he said, “that your worshipful lady mother hath in this matter an eagerness, whilk, although it ariseth doubtless from love to your best interests here and hereafter, — for the man is of persecuting blood, and himself a persecutor, a cavalier or malignant, and a scoffer, who hath no inheritance in Jesse, — nevertheless we are commanded to do justice unto all, and to fulfil our bond and covenant, as well to the stranger, as to him who is in brotherhood with us. Wherefore myself, even I myself, will be aiding unto the delivery of your letter to the man Edgar Ravenswood, trusting that the issue thereof may be your deliverance from the nets in which he hath sinfully engaged you. And that I may do in this neither more nor less than hath been warranted by your honourable parents, I pray you to transcribe, without increment or subtraction, the letter formerly expeded under the dictation of your right honourable mother; and I shall put it into such sure course of being delivered, that if, honoured young madam, you shall receive no answer, it will be necessary that you conclude that the man meaneth in silence to abandon that naughty contract, which, peradventure, he may be unwilling directly to restore.”

Lucy eagerly embraced the expedient of the worthy divine. A new letter was written in the precise terms of the former, and consigned by

Mr Bride - the - bent to the charge of Saunders Moonshine, a zealous elder of the church when on shore, and when on board his brig, as bold a smuggler as ever ran out a sliding bowsprit to the winds that blow betwixt Campvere and the east coast of Scotland. At the recommendation of his pastor, Saunders readily undertook that the letter should be securely conveyed to the Master of Ravenswood at the court where he now resided.

This retrospect became necessary to explain the conference betwixt Miss Ashton, her mother, and Bucklaw, which we have detailed in a preceding chapter.

Lucy was now like the sailor, who, while drifting through a tempestuous ocean, clings for safety to a single plank, his powers of grasping it becoming every moment more feeble, and the deep darkness of the night only chequered by the flashes of lightning, hissing as they show the white tops of the billows, in which he is soon to be engulfed.

Week crept away after week, and day after day. St Jude's day arrived, the last and protracted term to which Lucy had limited herself, and there was neither letter nor news of Ravenswood.

CHAPTER XXXII.

*How fair these names, how much unlike they
look*

*To all the blurr'd subscriptions in my book!
The bridegroom's letters stand in row above,
Tapering, yet straight, like pine-trees in his
grove;*

*While free and fine the bride's appear below,
As light and slender as her jessamines grow.*

Crabbe.

ST JUDE's day came, the term assigned by Lucy herself as the furthest date of expectation, and, as we have already said, there were neither letters from, nor news of, Ravenswood. But there were news of Bucklaw, and of his trusty associate Craigengelt, who arrived early in the morning for the completion of the proposed espousals, and for signing the necessary deeds.

These had been carefully prepared under the

revisal of Sir William Ashton himself, it having been resolved, on account of the state of Miss Ashton's health, as it was said, that none save the parties immediately interested should be present when the parchments were subscribed. It was further determined, that the marriage should be solemnized upon the fourth day after signing the articles, a measure adopted by Lady Ashton, in order that Lucy might have as little time as possible to recede, or relapse into intractability. There was no appearance, however, of her doing either. She heard the proposed arrangement with the calm indifference of despair, or rather with an apathy arising from the oppressed and stupified state of her feelings. To an eye so unobserving as that of Bucklaw, her demeanour had little more of reluctance than might suit the character of a bashful young lady, who, however, he could not disguise from himself, was complying with the choice of her friends, rather than exercising any personal predilection in his favour.

When the morning compliments of the bridegroom had been paid, Miss Ashton was left for some time to herself; her mother remarking, that the deeds must be signed before the hour of noon, in order that the marriage might be happy.

Lucy suffered herself to be drest for the occa-

sion, as the taste of her attendants suggested, and was of course splendidly arrayed. Her dress was composed of white satin and Brussels lace, and her hair arranged with a profusion of jewels, whose lustre made a strange contrast to the deadly paleness of her complexion, and to the trouble which dwelt in her unsettled eye.

Her toilette was hardly finished, ere Henry appeared to conduct the passive bride to the state apartment, where all was prepared for signing the contract. "Do you know, sister," he said, "I am glad you are to have Bucklaw after all, instead of Ravenswood, who looked like a Spanish grandee come to cut our throats, and trample our bodies under foot. And I am glad the broad seas are between us this day, for I shall never forget how frightened I was when I took him for the picture of old Sir Malise walked out of the canvass. Tell me true, are you not glad to be fairly shot of him?"

"Ask me no questions, Henry," said his unfortunate sister; "there is little more can happen to make me either glad or sorry in this world."

"And that's what all young brides say," said Henry; "and so do not be cast down, Lucy, for you'll tell another tale a twelve-month hence — and I am to be bride's-man, and ride before you to the kirk, and all our kith, kin,

and allies, and all Bucklaw's, are to be mounted and in order — and I am to have a scarlet laced coat, and a feathered hat, and a sword-belt, double bordered with gold, and *point d'Espagne*, and a dagger instead of a sword; and I should like a sword much better, but Douglas won't hear of it. All my things, and a hundred besides, are to come out from Edinburgh to-night with old Gilbert, and the sumpter mules — and I will bring them, and show them to you the instant they come."

The boy's chatter was here interrupted by the arrival of Lady Ashton, somewhat alarmed at her daughter's stay. With one of her sweetest smiles, she took Lucy's arm under her own, and led her to the apartment where her presence was expected.

There were only present, Str William Ashton, and Colonel Douglas Ashton, the last in full regimentals — Bucklaw in bridegroom trim — Craigengelt freshly equipt from top to toe by the bounty of his patron, and bedizened with as much lace as might have become the dress of the Copper Captain, together with the Rev. Mr Bide-the-bent; the presence of a minister being, in strict presbyterian families, an indispensable requisite upon all occasions of unusual solemnity.

Wines and refreshments were placed on a

table, on which the writings were displayed, ready for signature.

But before proceeding either to business or refreshment, Mr Bide-the-bent, at a signal from Sir William Ashton, invited the company to join him in a short extemporary prayer, in which he implored a blessing upon the contract now to be solemnized between the honourable parties then present. With the simplicity of his times and profession, which permitted strong personal allusions, he petitioned, that the wounded mind of one of these noble parties might be healed, in reward of her compliance with the advice of her right honourable parents; and that, as she had proved herself a child after God's commandment, by honouring her father and mother, she and her's might enjoy the promised blessing — length of days in the land here, and a happy portion hereafter in a better country. He prayed further, that the bridegroom might be weaned from those follies which seduce youth from the path of knowledge; that he might cease to take delight in vain and unprofitable company, scoffers, rioters, and those who sit late at the wine, (here Bucklaw winked to Craig-engelt), and cease from the society that causeth to err. A suitable supplication in behalf of Sir William and Lady Ashton, and their family, concluded this religious address, which thus

embraced every individual present, excepting Craigengelt, whom the worthy divine probably considered as past all hopes of grace.

The business of the day now went forward; Sir William Ashton signed the contract with legal solemnity and precision; his son, with military *non-chalance*; and Bucklaw, having subscribed as rapidly as Craigengelt could turn the leaves, concluded by wiping his pen on that worthy's new laced cravat.

It was now Miss Ashton's turn to sign the writings, and she was guided by her watchful mother to the table for that purpose. At her first attempt, she began to write with a dry pen, and when the circumstance was pointed out, seemed unable, after several attempts, to dip it in the massive silver ink-standish, which stood full before her. Lady Ashton's vigilance hastened to supply the deficiency. I have myself seen the fatal deed, and in the distinct characters in which the name of Lucy Ashton is traced on each page, there is only a very slight tremulous irregularity, indicative of her state of mind at the time of the subscription. But the last signature is incomplete, defaced, and blotted; for while her hand was employed in tracing it, the hasty tramp of a horse was heard at the gate, succeeded by a step in the outer gallery, and a voice, which, in a commanding

tone, bore down the opposition of the menials. The pen dropped from Lucy's fingers, as she exclaimed with a faint shriek — «He is come — he is come!»


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CHAPTER. XXXIII.

*This by his tongue should be a Montague!  
Fetch me my rapier, boy;  
Now, by the faith and honour of my kin,  
To strike him dead I hold it not a sin.*

*Romeo and Juliet.*

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**HARDLY** had Miss Ashton dropped the pen, when the door of the apartment flew open, and the Master of Ravenswood entered the apartment.

Lockhard and another domestic, who had in vain attempted to oppose his passage through the gallery or anti-chamber, were seen standing on the threshold transfixed with surprise, which was instantly communicated to the whole party in the state-room. That of Colonel Douglas Ashton was mingled with resentment; that of Bucklaw, with haughty and affected indifference; the rest, even Lady Ashton herself, shew-



ed signs of fear, and Lucy seemed petrified to stone by this unexpected apparition. Apparition it might well be termed, for Ravenswood had more the appearance of one returned from the dead, than of a living visitor.

He planted himself full in the middle of the apartment, opposite to the table at which Lucy was seated, on whom, as if she had been alone in the chamber, he bent his eyes with a mingled expression of deep grief and deliberate indignation. His darkcoloured riding cloak, displaced from one shoulder, hung around one side of his person in the ample folds of the Spanish mantle. The rest of his rich dress was travel-soil'd, and deranged by hard riding. He had a sword by his side, and pistols in his belt. His slouched hat, which he had not removed at entrance, gave an additional gloom to his dark features, which, wasted by sorrow, and marked by the ghastly look communicated by long illness, added to a countenance naturally somewhat stern and wild, a fierce and even savage expression. The matted and dishevelled locks of hair which escaped from under his hat, together with his fixed and unmoved posture, made his head more resemble that of a marble bust than of a living man. He said not a single word, and there was a deep silence in the company for more than two minutes.



It was broken by Lady Ashton, who in that space partly recovered her natural audacity. She demanded to know the cause of this unauthorised intrusion.

“That is a question, madam,” said her son, “which I have the best right to ask — and I must request of the Master of Ravenswood to follow me, where he can answer it at leisure.”

Bucklaw interposed, saying, “No man on earth should usurp his previous right in demanding an explanation from the Master. — Craigengelt,” he added, in an under tone, “d — n ye, why do you stand staring as if you saw a ghost? fetch me my sword from the gallery.”

“I will relinquish to no man,” said Colonel Ashton, “my right of calling to account the man who has offered this unparalleled affront to my family.”

“Be patient, gentlemen,” said Ravenswood, turning sternly towards them, and waving his hand as if to impose silence on their altercation. “If you are as weary of your lives as I am, I will find time and place to pledge mine against one or both; at present I have no leisure for the disputes of triflers.”

“Triflers!” echoed Colonel Ashton, half unsheathing his sword, while Bucklaw laid his hand on the hilt of that which Craigengelt had just reached him.



Sir William Ashton, alarmed for his son's safety, rushed between the young men and Ravenswood, exclaiming, "My son, I command you — Bucklaw, I entreat you — keep the peace, in the name of the queen and of the law."

"In the name of the law of God," said Bide-the-bent, advancing also with uplifted hands between Bucklaw, the Colonel, and the object of their resentment — "In the name of Him who brought peace on earth, and good will to mankind, I implore — I beseech — I command you to forbear violence towards each other. God hateth the blood-thirsty man — he who striketh with the sword, shall perish with the sword."

"Do you take me for a dog, sir," said Colonel Ashton, turning fiercely upon him, "or something more brutally stupid, to endure this insult in my father's house? — Let me go, Bucklaw! He shall account to me, or, by heaven, I will stab him where he stands."

"You shall not touch him here," said Bucklaw; "he once gave me my life, and were he the devil come to fly away with the whole house and generation, he shall have nothing but fair play."

The passions of the two young men thus counteracting each other, gave Ravenswood leisure



to exclaim, in a stern and steady voice, "Silence! — let him who really seeks danger, take the fitting time when it is to be found; my mission here will be shortly accomplished. — Is *that*, madam, your hand?" he added in a softer tone, extending towards Miss Ashton her last letter.

A faltering "Yes," seemed rather to escape from her lips, than to be uttered as a voluntary answer.

"And is *this* also your hand?" extending towards her the mutual engagement.

Lucy remained silent. Terror, and a yet stronger and more confused feeling, so utterly disturbed her understanding, that she probably scarcely comprehended the question that was put to her.

"If you design," said Sir William Ashton, "to found any legal claim on that paper, sir, do not expect to receive any answer to an extrajudicial question."

"Sir William Ashton," said Ravenswood, "I pray you, and all who hear me, that you will not mistake my purpose. If this young lady, of her own free-will, desires the restoration of this contract, as her letter would seem to imply — there is not a withered leaf which this autumn wind strews on the heath, that is more valueless in my eyes. But I must and will hear



the truth from her own mouth — without this satisfaction I will not leave this spot. Murder me by numbers you possibly may; but I am an armed man — I am a desperate man, — and I will not die without ample vengeance. This is my resolution, take it as you may. I WILL hear her determination from her own mouth; from her own mouth, alone, and without witnesses, will I hear it. Now chuse," he said, drawing his sword with the right hand, and, with the left, by the same motion taking a pistol from his belt and cocking it, but turning the point of one weapon and the muzzle of the other to the ground, — "Chuse if you will have this hall floated with blood, or if you will grant me the decisive interview with my affianced bride, which the laws of God and the country alike entitle me to demand."

All recoiled at the sound of his voice, and the determined action by which it was accompanied; for the ecstasy of real desperation seldom fails to overpower the less energetic passions by which it may be opposed. The clergyman was the first to speak. "In the name of God," he said, "receive an overture of peace from the meanest of his servants. What this honourable person demands, albeit it is urged with over violence, hath yet in it something of reason. Let him hear from Miss Lucy's own lips



that she hath dutifully acceded to the will of her parents, and repenteth her of her covenant with him; and when he is assured of this, he will depart in peace unto his own dwelling, and cumber us no more. Alas! the workings of the ancient Adam are strong even in the regenerate — surely we should have long suffering with those who, being yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, are swept forward by the uncontrollable current of worldly passion. Let then the Master of Ravenswood have the interview on which he insisteth; it can but be as a passing pang to his honourable maiden, since her faith is now irrevocably pledged to the choice of her parents. Let it, I say, be thus: it belongeth to my functions to entreat your honours' compliance with this healing overture."

"Never," answered Lady Ashton, whose rage had now overcome her first surprise and terror — "never shall this man speak in private with my daughter, the affianced bride of another. Pass from this room who will, I remain here. I fear neither his violence nor his weapons, though some," she said, glancing a look towards Colonel Ashton, "who bear my name, appear more moved by them."

"For God's sake, madam," answered the worthy divine, "add not fuel to firebrands. The Master of Ravenswood cannot, I am sure, ob-



ject to your presence, the young lady's state of health being considered, and your maternal duty. I myself will also tarry; peradventure my grey hairs may turn away wrath."

"You are welcome to do so, sir," said Ravenswood; "and Lady Ashton is also welcome to remain, if she shall think proper; but let all others depart."

"Ravenswood," said Colonel Ashton, crossing him as he went out, "you shall account for this ere long."

"When you please," replied Ravenswood.

"But I," said Bucklaw, with a half smile, "have a prior demand on your leisure, a claim of some standing."

"Arrange it as you will," said Ravenswood; "leave me but this day in peace, and I will have no dearer employment on earth, to-morrow, than to give you all the satisfaction you can desire."

The other gentlemen left the apartment; but Sir William Ashton lingered.

"Master of Ravenswood," he said, in a conciliating tone, "I think I have not deserved that you should make this scandal and outrage in my family. If you will sheathe your sword, and retire with me into my study, I will prove to you, by the most satisfactory arguments, the inutility of your present irregular procedure——"



“To-morrow, sir — to-morrow — to-morrow, I will hear you at length,” reiterated Ravenswood, interrupting him; “this day hath its own sacred and indispensable business.”

He pointed to the door, and Sir William left the apartment.

Ravenswood sheathed his sword, uncocked and returned his pistol to his belt, walked deliberately to the door of the apartment, which he bolted — returned, raised his hat from his forehead, and, gazing upon Lucy with eyes in which an expression of sorrow overcame their late fierceness, spread his dishevelled locks back from his face, and said, “Do you know me, Miss Ashton? — I am still Edgar Ravenswood.” She was silent; and he went on, with increasing vehemence — “I am still that Edgar Ravenswood, who, for your affection, renounced the dear ties by which injured honour bound him to seek vengeance. I am that Ravenswood, who, for your sake, forgave, nay, clasped hands in friendship with the oppressor and pillager of his house — the traducer and murderer of his father.”

“My daughter,” answered Lady Ashton, interrupting him, “has no occasion to dispute the identity of your person; the venom of your present language is sufficient to remind her, that



she speaks with the mortal enemy of her father."

"I pray you to be patient, madam," answered Ravenswood; "my answer must come from her own lips. — Once more, Miss Lucy Ashton, I am that Ravenswood to whom you granted the solemn engagement, which you now desire to retract and cancel."

Lucy's bloodless lips could only falter out the words, "It was my mother."

"She speaks truly," said Lady Ashton; "it was I, who, authorised alike by the laws of God and man, advised her, and concurred with her, to set aside an unhappy and precipitate engagement, and to annul it by the authority of Scripture itself."

"Scripture!" said Ravenswood, scornfully.

"Let him hear the text," said Lady Ashton, appealing to the divine, "on which you yourself, with cautious reluctance, declared the nullity of the pretended engagement insisted upon by this violent man."

The clergyman took his clasped Bible from his pocket, and read the following words: "*If a woman vow a vow unto the Lord, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth, and her father hear her vow and her bond, wherewith she hath bound her soul,*



*and her father shall hold his peace at her, then all her vow shall stand."*

"And was it not even so with us?" interrupted Ravenswood.

"Controul thy impatience, young man," answered the divine, "and hear what follows in the sacred text: — *But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth, not any of her vows, nor of her bonds, wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand. And the Lord shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her.*"

"And was not," said Lady Ashton, fiercely and triumphantly breaking in, — "was not our's the case stated in holy writ? — Will this person deny, that the instant her parents heard of the vow, or bond, by which our daughter had bound her soul, we disallowed the same in the most express terms, and informed him by writing of our determination?"

"And is this all?" said Ravenswood, looking at Lucy — "Are you willing to barter sworn faith, the exercise of free-will, and the feelings of mutual affection, to this wretched hypocritical sophistry?"

"Hear him!" said Lady Ashton, looking to the clergyman — "hear the blasphemer!"

"May God forgive him," said Bide-the-bent, "and enlighten his ignorance!"



“Hear what I have sacrificed for you,” said Ravenswood, still addressing Lucy, “ere you sanction what has been done in your name. The honour of an ancient family, the urgent advice of my best friends, have been in vain used to sway my resolution; neither the arguments of reason, nor the portents of superstition, have shaken my fidelity. The very dead have arisen to warn me, and their warning has been despised. Are you prepared to pierce my heart for its fidelity, with the very weapon which my rash confidence entrusted to your grasp?”

“Master of Ravenswood,” said Lady Ashton, “you have asked what questions you thought fit. You see the total incapacity of my daughter to answer you. But I will reply for her, and in a manner which you cannot dispute. You desire to know whether Lucy Ashton, of her own free-will, desires to annul the engagement into which she has been trepanned. You have her letter under her own hand, demanding the surrender of it; and, in yet more full evidence of her purpose, here is the contract which she has this morning subscribed, in presence of this reverend gentleman, with Mr Hayston of Bucklaw.”

Ravenswood gazed upon the deed, as if petrified. “And it was without fraud or compulsion,”



said he, looking towards the clergyman, "that Miss Ashton subscribed this parchment?"

"I vouch it upon my sacred character."

"This is, indeed, madam, an undeniable piece of evidence," said Ravenswood sternly; "and it will be equally unnecessary and dishonourable to waste another word in useless remonstrance or reproach. There, madam," he said, laying down before Lucy the signed paper and the broken piece of gold — "there are the evidences of your first engagement; may you be more faithful to that which you have just formed. I will trouble you to return the corresponding tokens of my ill-placed confidence — I ought rather to say of my egregious folly."

Lucy returned the scornful glance of her lover with a gaze, from which perception seemed to have been banished; yet she seemed partly to have understood his meaning, for she raised her hands as if to undo a blue ribbon which she wore around her neck. She was unable to accomplish her purpose, but Lady Ashton cut the ribbon asunder, and detached the broken piece of gold which Miss Ashton had till then worn concealed in her bosom; the written counterpart of the lovers' engagement she for some time had had in her own possession. With a haughty curtsy, she delivered both to Ravenswood,



who was much softened when he took the piece of gold,

“And she could wear it thus,” he said — speaking to himself — “could wear it in her very bosom — could wear it next to her heart — even when — but complaint avails not,” he said, dashing from his eye the tear which had gathered in it, and resuming the stern composure of his manner. He strode to the chimney, and threw into the fire the paper and piece of gold, stamping upon the coals with the heel of his boot, as if to insure their destruction. “I will be no longer,” he then said, “an intruder here — Your evil wishes, and your worse offices, Lady Ashton, I will only return, by hoping these will be your last machinations against your daughter’s honour and happiness — And to you, madam,” he said, addressing Lucy, “I have nothing farther to say, except to pray to God that you may not become a world’s wonder for this act of wilful and deliberate perjury.” — Having uttered these words, he turned on his heel, and left the apartment.

Sir William Ashton, by entreaty and authority, had detained his son and Bucklaw in a distant part of the castle, in order to prevent their again meeting with Ravenswood; but as the Master descended the great staircase, Lockhard delivered him a billet, signed Sholto Dou-



glas Ashton, requesting to know where the Master of Ravenswood would be heard of four or five days from hence, as the writer had business of weight to settle with him, so soon as an important family event had taken place.

"Tell Colonel Ashton," said Ravenswood, composedly, "I shall be found at Wolf's Crag when his leisure serves him."

As he descended the outward stair which led from the terrace, he was a second time interrupted by Craigengelt, who, on the part of his principal, the Laird of Bucklaw, expressed a hope, that Ravenswood would not leave Scotland within ten days at least, as he had both former and recent civilities for which to express his gratitude.

"Tell your master," said Ravenswood fiercely, "to chuse his own time. He will find me at Wolf's Crag, if his purpose is not forestalled."

"*My* master?" replied Craigengelt, encouraged by seeing Colonel Ashton and Bucklaw at the bottom of the terrace, "give me leave to say, I know of no such person upon earth, nor will I permit such language to be used to me."

"Seek your master, then, in hell!" exclaimed Ravenswood, giving way to the passion he had hitherto restrained, and throwing Craigengelt from him with such violence, that he rolled down the steps, and lay senseless at the



foot of them — "I am a fool," he instantly added, "to vent my passion upon a caitiff so worthless."

He then mounted his horse, which at his arrival he had secured to a ballustrade in front of the castle, rode very slowly past Bucklaw and Colonel Ashton, raising his hat as he past each, and looking in their faces steadily while he offered this mute salutation, which was returned by both with the same stern gravity. Ravenswood walked on with equal deliberation until he reached the head of the avenue, as if to shew that he rather courted than avoided interruption. When he had passed the upper gate, he turned his horse, and looked at the castle with a fixed eye; then set spurs to his good steed, and departed with the speed of a demon dismissed by the exorcist.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

*„Who comes from the bridal chamber?”  
It is Azrael, the angel of death.*

*Thalaba.*

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AFTER the dreadful scene that had taken place at the castle, Lucy was transported to her own chamber, where she remained for some time in a state of absolute stupor. Yet afterwards, in the course of the ensuing day, she seemed to have recovered, not merely her spirits and resolution, but a sort of flighty levity, that was foreign to her character and situation, and which was at times checquered by fits of deep silence and melancholy, and of capricious pettishness. Lady Ashton became much alarmed, and consulted the family physicians. But as her pulse indicated no change, they could only say that the disease was on the spirits, and recommend-



ed gentle exercise and amusement. Miss Ashton never alluded to what had passed in the state-room. It seemed doubtful even if she was conscious of it, for she was often observed to raise her hands to her neck, as if in search of the ribbon that had been taken from it, and mutter, in surprise and discontent, when she could not find it, "It was the link that bound me to life."

Notwithstanding all these remarkable symptoms, Lady Ashton was too deeply pledged, to delay her daughter's marriage even in her present state of health. It cost her much trouble to keep up the fair side of appearances towards Bucklaw. She was well aware, that if he once saw any reluctance on her daughter's part, he would break off the treaty, to her great personal shame and dishonour. She therefore resolved, that, if Lucy continued passive, the marriage should take place upon the day that had been previously fixed, trusting that a change of place, of situation, and of character, would operate a more speedy and effectual cure upon the unsettled spirits of her daughter, than could be attained by the slow measures which the medical men recommended. Sir William Ashton's views of family aggrandisement, and his desire to strengthen himself against the measures of the Marquis of A — —, readily induced him to



acquiesce in what he could not have perhaps resisted if willing to do so. As for the young men, Bucklaw and Colonel Ashton, they protested, that after what had happened, it would be most dishonourable to postpone for a single hour the time appointed for the marriage, as it would be generally ascribed to their being intimidated by the intrusive visit and threats of Ravenswood.

Bucklaw would indeed have been incapable of such precipitation, had he been aware of the state of Miss Ashton's health, or rather of her mind. But custom, upon these occasions, permitted only brief and sparing intercourse between the bridegroom and the bride; a circumstance so well improved by Lady Ashton, that Bucklaw neither saw nor suspected.

On the eve of the bridal day, Lucy appeared to have one of her fits of levity, and surveyed with a degree of girlish interest the various preparations of dress, etc. etc., which the different members of the family had prepared for the occasion.

The morning dawned bright and cheerily. The bridal guests assembled in gallant troops from distant quarters. Not only the relations of Sir William Ashton, and the still more dignified connections of his lady, together with the numerous kinsmen and allies of the bridegroom,



were present upon this joyful ceremony, gallantly mounted, arrayed, and caparisoned, but almost every presbyterian family of distinction, within fifty miles, made a point of attending upon an occasion which was considered as giving a sort of triumph over the Marquis of A —, in the person of his kinsman. Splendid refreshments awaited the guests on their arrival, and after it was finished, the cry was to horse. The bride was led forth betwixt her brother Henry and her mother. Her gaiety of the preceding day had given rise to a deep shade of melancholy, which, however, did not misbecome an occasion so momentous. There was a light in her eyes, and a colour in her cheek, which had not been kindled for many a day, and which, joined to her great beauty, and the splendour of her dress and jewels, occasioned her entrance to be greeted with an universal murmur of applause, in which even the ladies could not refrain themselves from joining. While the cavalcade were getting to horse, Sir William Ashton, a man of peace and of form, censured his son Henry for having begirt himself with a military sword of preposterous length, belonging to his brother, Colonel Ashton.

“If you must have a sword,” he said, “upon such a peaceful occasion, why did you not use



the short weapon sent from Edinburgh on purpose?"

The boy vindicated himself, by saying it was lost.

"You put it out of the way yourself, I suppose," said his father, "out of ambition to wear that thing that might have served Sir William Wallace — but never mind, get to horse now, and take care of your sister."

The boy did so, and was placed in the centre of the gallant train. At the time he was too full of his own appearance, his sword, his laced cloak, his feathered hat, and his managed horse, to pay much regard to any thing else; but he afterwards remembered to the hour of his death, that when the hand of his sister, by which she supported herself on the pillion behind him, touched his own, it felt as wet and cold as sepulchral marble.

Glancing wide over hill and dale, the fair bridal procession at last reached the parish church, which they nearly filled; for, besides domestics, above a hundred gentlemen and ladies were present upon the occasion. The marriage ceremony was performed, according to the rites of the presbyterian persuasion, to which Bucklaw of late had judged it proper to conform.

On the outside of the church, a liberal dole was distributed to the poor of the neighbour-



ing parishes, under the direction of Johnny Morthench, who had lately been promoted from his desolate quarters at the Hermitage, to fill the more eligible situation of sexton at the parish-church of Ravenswood. Dame Gourlay, with two of her contemporaries, the same who assisted at Alice's late-wake, seated apart upon a flat monument, or *through-stane*, sate enviously comparing the shares which had been allotted to them in dividing the dole.

"Johnny Morthench," said Annie Winnie, "might hae minded auld lang syne, and thought of his auld kimmers, for as braw as he is with his new black coat. I hae gotten but five herring instead o' sax, and this disna look like a gude saxpennys, and I dare say this bit morsel o' beef is an unce lighter than ony that's been dealt round; and it's a bit o' the tenony hough, mair by token, that your's, Maggie, is out o' the back-sey."

"Mine, quo' she?" mumbled the paralytic hag, "mine is half banes, I trow. If grit folk gie poor bodies ony thing for coming to their weddings and burials, it suld be something that wad do them gude, I think."

"Their gifts," said Ailsie Gourlay, "are dealt for nae love of us — nor for respect for whether we feed or starve. They wad gie us whin-stances for loaves, if it would serve their ain



vanity, and yet they expect us to be as gratefu' as they ca' it, as if they served us for true love and likeing."

"And that's truly said," answered her companion.

"But, Ailsie Gourlay, ye're the auldest o' us three, did ye ever see a mair grand bridal?"

"I winna say that I have," answered the hag; "but I think soon to see as braw a burial."

"And that wad please me as weel," said Annie Winnie; "for there's as large a dole, and folk are nor obliged to grin and laugh, and mak murgeons, and wish joy to these hellicat quality, that lord it ower us like brute beasts. I like to pack the dead dole in my lap, and rin ower my auld rhyme, —

My loaf in my lap, my penny in my purse,  
Thou art ne'er the better, and I'm ne'er the worse."

"That's right, Annie," said the paralytic woman; "God send us a green Yule and a fat kirk-yard!"

"But I wad like to ken, Lucky Gourlay, for ye're the auldest and wisest amang us, whilk o' these revellers turns it will be to be streekit first."

"D'ye see yon dandilly maiden," said Dame



Gourlay, «a' glistenin' wi' goud and jewels, that they are mounting on the white horse behind that hare-brained callant in scarlet, wi' the lang sword at his side?»

«But that's the bride!» said her companion, her cold heart touched with some sense of compassion; «that's the very bride hersell! Eh, whow! sae young, sae braw, and sae bonnie — and is her time sae short?»

«I tell ye her winding sheet,” said the sybil, „is up as high as her throat already, believe it wha list. Her sand has but few grains to run out, and nae wonder — they've been weel shaken. The leaves are withering fast on the trees, but she'll never see the Martinmas wind gar them dance in swirls like the fairy rings.”

«Ye waited on her for a quarter,” said the paralytic woman, «and got twa red pieces, or I am far beguiled.”

«Ay, ay,” answered Ailsie, with a bitter grin; «and Sir William Ashton promised me a bonnie red gown to the boot o' that — a stake, and a chain, and a tar-barrel, lass! — what think ye o' that for a propine? — for being up early and down late for fourscore nights and mair wi' his dwining daughter. But he may keep it for his ain lady, cummers.”

«I hae heard a sough,” said Annie Winnie, «as if Lady Ashton was nae canny body.”



“D’ye see her yonder,” said Dame Gourlay, “as she prances on her grey gelding out at the kirk-yard? — there’s mair o’ utter deevilry in that woman, as brave and fair-fashioned as she rides yonder, than in a’ the Scotch witches that ever flew by moonlight ower North-Berwick Law.”

“What’s that ye say about witches, ye damned hags?” said Johnnie Morthench; “are ye casting ye’re cantraips in the very kirk-yard, to mischief the bride and bride-groom? Get awa’ hame, for if I tak my souple t’ye, I’ll gar ye find the road faster than ye wad like.”

“Eh! sirs!” answered Ailsie Gourlay; “how bra’ are we wi’ our new black coat and our weel-pouthered head, as if we had never kenned hunger nor thirst oursells! and we’ll be screwing up our bit fiddle, doubtless, in the ha’ the night, amang a’ the other elbo’ jiggers for miles round — let’s see if the pins haud, Johnnie — that’s a’, lad.”

“I take ye a’ to witness, gude people,” said Morthench, “that she threatens me wi’ mischief, and forespeaks me. If ony-thing but gude happens to me or my fiddle this night, I’ll make it the blackest night’s job she ever stirred in. I’ll hae her before Presbytery and Synod — I’m half a miniter mysel’, now that I’m a bedral in an inhabited parish.”



Although the mutual hatred betwixt these hags and the rest of mankind had steeled their hearts against all impressions of festivity, this was by no means the case with the multitude at large. The splendour of the bridal retinue — the gay dresses — the spirited horses — the blithesome appearance of the handsome women and gallant gentlemen assembled upon the occasion, had the usual effect upon the minds of the populace. The repeated shouts, of «Ashton and Bucklaw for ever!» — the discharge of pistols, guns, and muskettoons, to give what was called the bridal-shot, evinced the interest the people took in the occasion of the cavalcade, as they accompanied it upon their return to the castle. If there was here and there an elder peasant or his wife who sneered at the pomp of the upstart family, and remembered the days of the long-descended Ravenswoods, even they, attracted by the plentiful cheer which the castle that day afforded to rich and poor, held their way thither, and acknowledged, notwithstanding their prejudices, the influence of *l'Amphitrion où l'on dine*.

Thus accompanied with the attendance both of rich and poor, Lucy returned to her father's house. Bucklaw used his privilege of riding next to the bride, but, new to such a situation, rather endeavoured to attract attention by the



display of his person and horsemanship, than by any attempt to address her in private. They reached the castle in safety, amid a thousand joyous acclamations.

It is well known that the weddings of ancient days were celebrated with a festive publicity rejected by the delicacy of modern times. The marriage-guests upon the present occasion were regaled with a banquet of unbounded profusion, the relics of which, after the domestics had feasted in their turn, were distributed among the shouting crowd, with as many barrels of ale as made the hilarity without correspond to that within the castle. The gentlemen, according to the fashion of the times, indulged, for the most part, in deep draughts of the richest wines, while the ladies, prepared for the ball, which always closed a bridal entertainment, impatiently expected their arrival in the state gallery. At length the social party broke up at a late hour, and the gentlemen crowded into the saloon, and, enlivened by wine and the joyful occasion, laid aside their swords, and handed their impatient partners to the floor. The music already rung from the gallery, along the fretted roof of the ancient state apartment. According to strict etiquette, the bride ought to have opened the ball, but Lady Ashton, making an apology on account of her daughter's health, offer-



ed her own hand to Bucklaw as substitute for her daughter's.

But as Lady Ashton raised her head gracefully, expecting the strain at which she was to begin the dance, she was so much struck by an unexpected alteration in the ornaments of the apartment, that she was surprised into an exclamation, — "Who has dared to change the pictures?"

All looked up, and those who knew the usual state of the apartment, observed, with surprise, that the picture of Sir William Ashton's father was removed from its place, and in its stead that of old Sir Malise Ravenswood seemed to frown wrath and vengeance upon the party assembled below. The exchange must have been made while the apartments were empty, but had not been observed until the torches and lights in the sconces were kindled for the ball. The haughty and heated spirits of the gentlemen led them to demand an immediate enquiry into the cause of what they deemed an affront to their host and to themselves; but Lady Ashton, recovering herself, passed it over as the freak of a crazy wench who was maintained about the castle, and whose susceptible imagination had been observed to be much affected by the stories which Dame Gourlay delighted to tell concerning "the former family," so Lady Ashton nam-



ed the Ravenswoods. The obnoxious picture was immediately removed, and the ball was opened by Lady Ashton with a grace and dignity which supplied the charms of youth, and almost verified the extravagant encomiums of the elder part of the company, who extolled her performance as far exceeding the dancing of the rising generation.

When Lady Ashton sat down, she was not surprised to find that her daughter had left the apartment, and she herself followed, eager to obviate any impression which might have been made upon her nerves by an incident so likely to affect them as the mysterious transposition of the portraits. Apparently she found her apprehensions groundless, for she returned in about an hour, and whispered the bridegroom, who extricated himself from the dancers, and vanished from the apartment. The instruments now played their loudest strains — the dancers pursued their exercise with all the enthusiasm inspired by youth, mirth, and high spirits, when a cry was heard so shrill and piercing, as at once to arrest the dance and the music. All stood motionless; but when the yell was again repeated, Colonel Ashton snatched a torch from the sconce, and demanding the key of the bridal-chamber from Henry, to whom, as bride's-man, it had been entrusted, rushed thither,



followed by Sir William and Lady Ashton, and one or two others, near relations of the family. The bridal guests waited their return in stupefied amazement.

Arrived at the door of the apartment, Colonel Ashton knocked and called, but received no answer, except stifled groans. He hesitated no longer to open the door of the apartment, in which he found opposition, from something which lay against it. When he had succeeded in opening it, the body of the bridegroom was found lying on the threshold of the bridal-chamber, and all around was flooded with blood. A cry of surprise and horror was raised by all present; and the company, excited by this new alarm, began to rush tumultuously towards the sleeping apartment. Colonel Ashton, first whispering to his mother, — "Search for her — she has murdered him!" drew his sword, planted himself in the passage, and declared he would suffer no man to pass excepting the clergyman, and the medical person present. By their assistance, Bucklaw, who still breathed, was raised from the ground, and transported to another apartment, where his friends, full of suspicion and murmuring, assembled round him to learn the opinion of the surgeon.

In the mean while, Lady Ashton, her husband, and their assistants, in vain sought Lucy



in the bridal bed and in the chamber. There was no private passage from the room, and they began to think that she must have thrown herself from the window, when one of the company, holding his torch lower than the rest, discovered something white in the corner of the great old-fashioned chimney of the apartment. Here they found the unfortunate girl, seated, or rather couched like a hare upon its form — her head-gear dishevelled; her night-clothes torn and dabbled with blood, — her eyes glazed, and her features convulsed into a wild paroxysm of insanity. When she saw herself discovered, she gibbered, made mouths, and pointed at them with her bloody fingers, with the frantic gestures of an exulting demoniac.

Female assistance was now hastily summoned; the unhappy bride was overpowered, not without the use of some force. As they carried her over the threshold, she looked down, and uttered the only articulate words that she had yet spoken, saying, with a sort of grinning exultation, — “So, you have ta’en up your bonnie bridegroom?” She was by the shuddering assistants conveyed to another and more retired apartment, where she was secured as her situation required, and closely watched. The unutterable agony of the parents — the horror and confusion of all who were in the castle — the



fury of contending passions between the friends of the different parties, passions augmented by previous intemperance, surpass description.

The surgeon was the first who obtained something like a patient hearing; he pronounced that the wound of Bucklaw, though severe and dangerous, was by no means fatal, but might readily be rendered so by disturbance and hasty removal. This silenced the numerous party of Bucklaw's friends, who had previously insisted that he should, at all rates, be transported from the castle to the nearest of their houses. They still demanded, however, that, in consideration of what had happened, four of their number should remain to watch over the sick bed of their friend, and that a suitable number of their domestics, well armed, should also remain in the castle. This condition being acceded to on the part of Colonel Ashton and his father, the rest of the bridegroom's friends left the castle, notwithstanding the hour and the darkness of the night. The cares of the medical man were next employed in behalf of Miss Ashton, whom he pronounced to be in a very dangerous state. Farther medical assistance was immediately summoned. All night she remained delirious. On the morning, she fell into a state of absolute insensibility. The next evening, the physicians said, would be the crisis of her malady. It pro-



ved so, for although she awoke from her trance with some appearance of calmness, and suffered her night-clothes to be changed, or put in order, yet so soon as she put her hand to her neck, as if to search for the fatal blue ribbon, a tide of recollections seemed to rush upon her, which her mind and body were alike incapable of bearing. Convulsion followed convulsion, till they closed in death, without her being able to utter a word explanatory of the fatal scene.

The provincial judge of the district arrived the day after the young lady had expired, and executed, though with all possible delicacy to the afflicted family, the painful duty of enquiring into this fatal transaction. But there occurred nothing to explain the general hypothesis, that the bride, in a sudden fit of insanity, had stabbed the bridegroom at the threshold of the apartment. The fatal weapon was found in the chamber, smeared with blood. It was the same poniard which Henry should have worn upon the wedding day, and which his unhappy sister had probably contrived to secrete upon the succeeding evening, when it had been shewn to her among other articles of preparation for the wedding.

The friends of Bucklaw expected that upon his recovery he would throw some light upon this dark story, and eagerly pressed him with



enquiries, which for some time he evaded under pretext of weakness. When, however, he had been transported to his own house, and was considered as in a state of convalescence, he assembled those persons, both male and female, who had considered themselves as entitled to press him on this subject, and returned them thanks for the interest they had expressed in his behalf, and their offers of adherence and support. «I wish you all,” he said, «my friends, to understand, however, that I have neither story to tell, nor injuries to avenge. If a lady shall question me hence-forward upon the incidents of that unhappy night, I shall remain silent, and in future consider her as desirous to break off her friendship with me. But if a gentleman shall ask me the same question, I shall regard the incivility as equivalent to an invitation to meet him in the Duke’s Walk, and I expect that he will rule himself accordingly.”

A declaration so decisive admitted no commentary; and it was soon after seen that Bucklaw had arisen from the bed of sickness a sadder and a wiser man than he had hitherto shewn himself. He dismissed Craigengelt from his society, but not without such a provision as, if well employed, might secure him against indigence, and against temptation.



Bucklaw afterwards went abroad, and never returned to Scotland; nor was he known ever to hint at the circumstances attending his fatal marriage. By many readers this may be deemed overstrained, romantic, and composed by the wild imagination of an author, desirous of gratifying the popular appetite for the horrible; but those who are read in the private family history of Scotland during the period in which the scene is laid, will readily discover, through the disguise of borrowed names and added incidents, the leading particulars of AN OWER TRUE TALE.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

*Whose mind's so marbled, and his heart so  
hard,  
That would not, when this huge mishap was  
heard,  
To th' utmost note of sorrow set their song,  
To see a gallant, with so great a grace,  
So suddenly unthought on, so o'erthrown,  
And so to perish, in so poor a place,  
By too rash riding in a ground unknown!*

*Poem, in Nisbet's Heraldry, Vol. II.*

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WE have anticipated the course of time to mention Bucklaw's recovery and fate, that we might not interrupt the detail of events which succeeded the funeral of the unfortunate Lucy Ashton. This melancholy ceremony was performed in the misty dawn of an autumnal morning, with as little attendance and ceremony as could pos-



sibly be dispensed with. A very few of the nearest relations attended her body to the same churchyard to which she had so lately been led as a bride, with as little free-will, perhaps, upon that former occasion, as could be now testified by her lifeless and passive remains. An aisle adjacent to the church had been fitted up by Sir William Ashton as a family cemetery; here, in a coffin bearing neither name nor date, were consigned to dust the remains of what was once lovely, beautiful, and innocent, though exasperated to phrenzy by a long tract of unremitting persecution. While the mourners were busy in the vault, the three village hags, who, notwithstanding the unwonted earliness of the hour, had snuffed the carrion like vultures, were seated on the "through-stane," and engaged in their wonted unhallowed conference.

"Did not I say," said Dame Gourlay, "that the braw bridal would be followed by as braw a funeral?"

"I think," answered Dame Winnie, "there's little bravery at it; neither meat nor drink, and just a wheen silver tippences to the poor folk; it was little worth while to come sae far road for sae sma' profit, and us sae frail."

"Out, wretch!" replied Dame Gourlay, "can a' the dainties they could gi'e us be half sae sweet as this hour's vengeance? There they are



that were capering on their prancing nags four days since, and they are now ganging as driegh and sober as oursells the day. They were a' glistening wi' gowd and silver — they're now as black as the crook. And Miss Lucy Ashton, that grudged when an honest woman came near her, a taed may sit on her coffin the day, and she never scunner when he croaks. And Lady Ashton has hell-fire burning in her breast by this time; and Sir William, wi' his gibbets, and his faggots, and his chains, how likes he the witcheries of his ain dwelling house?"

"And is it true then," mumbled the paralytic wretch, "that the bride was trailed out of her bed and up the chimley by evil spirits, and that the bridegroom's face was wrung round ahint him?"

"Ye needna care wha did it, or how it was done," said Ailsie Gourley; "but I'll uphaud it for nae sticket job, and that the lairds and ladies ken this day."

"And was it true," said Annie Winnie, "sin ye ken sae mickle about it, that the picture of auld Sir Malise Ravenswood came down on the ha' floor, and led out the brawl before them a'?"

"Na," said Ailsie; "but into the ha' came the picture — and I ken weel how it came there — to gi'e them a warning that pride would get



a fa'. But there's as queer a ploy, cummers, as ony o' thae, that's gaun on even now in the burial vault yonder — — ye saw twal' mourners, wi' crape and cloke, gang down the steps pair and pair?"

"What should ail us to see them?" said the one old woman.

"I counted them," said the other, with the eagerness of a person to whom the spectacle had afforded too much interest to be viewed with indifference.

"But ye did not see," said Ailsie, exulting in her superior observation, "that there's a thirteenth amang them that they ken naething about; and, if auld freets say true, there's ane o' that company that'll no be lang for this world. But come awa, cummers; if we bide here, I'se warrant we get the wyte o' whatever ill comes of it, and that gude will come of it nane o' them need ever think to see."

And thus, croaking like the ravens when they anticipate pestilence, the ill-boding sybils withdrew from the church-yard.

In fact, the mourners, when the service of interment was ended, discovered that there was among them one more than the invited number, and the remark was communicated in whispers to each other. The suspicion fell upon a figure, which, muffled in the same deep mourning with



the others, was reclined, almost in a state of insensibility, against one of the pillars of the sepulchral vault. The relatives of the Ashton family were expressing in whispers their surprise and displeasure at the intrusion, when they were interrupted by Colonel Ashton, who, in his father's absence, acted as principal mourner. "I know," he said in a whisper, "who this person is; he has, or shall soon have, as deep cause of mourning as ourselves — leave me to deal with him, and do not disturb the ceremony by unnecessary exposure." So saying, he separated himself from the group of his relations, and taking the unknown mourner by the cloak, he said to him, in a tone of suppressed emotion, "Follow me."

The stranger, as if starting from a trance at the sound of his voice, mechanically obeyed, and they ascended the broken ruinous stair which led from the sepulchre into the churchyard. The other mourners followed, but remained grouped together at the door of the vault, watching with anxiety the motions of Colonel Ashton and the stranger, who now appeared to be in close conference beneath the shade of a yew tree, in the most remote part of the burial ground.

To this sequestered spot Colonel Ashton had guided the stranger, and then turning round,



addressed him in a stern and composed tone — “I cannot doubt that I speak to the Master of Ravenswood.” No answer was returned. “I cannot doubt,” resumed the Colonel, trembling with rising passion, “that I speak to the murderer of my sister?”

“You have named me but too truly,” said Ravenswood, in a hollow and tremulous voice.

“If you repent what you have done,” said the Colonel, “may your penitence avail you before God; with me it shall serve you nothing. Here,” he said, giving a paper, is the measure of my sword, and a memorandum of the time and place of meeting. Sun rise to-morrow morning, on the Links to the east of Wolf’s-hope.”

The Master of Ravenswood held the paper in his hand, and seemed irresolute. At length he spoke — “Do not,” he said, “urge to farther desperation a wretch who is already desperate. Enjoy your life while you can, and let me seek my death from another.”

“That you never, never shall,” said Ashton. “You shall die by my hand, or you shall complete the ruin of my family on taking my life. If you refuse me my open challenge, there is no advantage I will not take of you, no indignity with which I will not load you, until the very name of Ravenswood shall be the sign of



every thing that is dishonourable, as it is already of all that is villainous."

"That it shall never be," said Ravenswood, fiercely; "if I am the last who shall bear it, I owe it to those who once owned it, that the name shall be extinguished without infamy. I accept your challenge, time, and place of meeting. We meet, I presume, alone?"

"Alone we meet," said Colonel Ashton, "and alone will the survivor of us return from that place of rendez-vous."

"Then God have mercy on the soul of him who falls!" said Ravenswood.

"So be it!" said Colonel Ashton; "so far can my charity reach even for the man I hate most deadly, and with the deepest reason. Now, break off, for we shall be interrupted. The links by the sea-shore to the east of Wolf's-hope — the hour sun-rise — our swords our only weapons."

"Enough," said the Master, "I will not fail you."

They separated; Colonel Ashton joining the rest of the mourners, and the Master of Ravenswood taking his horse, which was tied to a tree behind the church. Colonel Ashton returned to the castle with the funeral guests, but found a pretext for detaching himself from them in the evening, when, changing his dress to a riding



habit, he rode to Wolf's-hope that night, and took up his abode in the little inn, in order that he might be ready for his rendez-vous in the morning.

It is not known how the Master of Ravenswood disposed of the rest of that unhappy day. Late at night, however, he arrived at Wolf's Crag, and aroused his old domestic, Celeb Balderstone, who had ceased to expect his return. Confused and flying rumours of the late tragical death of Miss Ashton, and of its mysterious cause, had already reached the old man, who was filled with the utmost anxiety, on account of the probable effect these events might produce upon the mind of his master.

The conduct of Ravenswood had nothing to alleviate his apprehensions. To the Butler's trembling entreaties, that he would take some refreshment, he at first returned no answer, and then suddenly and fiercely demanding wine, he drank, contrary to his habits, a very large draught. Seeing that his master would eat nothing, the old man affectionately entreated that he would permit him to light him to his chamber. It was not until the request was three or four times repeated, that Ravenswood made a mute sign of compliance. But when Balderstone conducted him to an apartment which had been comfortably fitted up, and which, since his re-



every thing that is dishonourable, as it is already of all that is villainous."

"That it shall never be," said Ravenswood, fiercely; "if I am the last who shall bear it, I owe it to those who once owned it, that the name shall be extinguished without infamy. I accept your challenge, time, and place of meeting. We meet, I presume, alone?"

"Alone we meet," said Colonel Ashton, "and alone will the survivor of us return from that place of rendez-vous."

"Then God have mercy on the soul of him who falls!" said Ravenswood.

"So be it!" said Colonel Ashton; "so far can my charity reach even for the man I hate most deadly, and with the deepest reason. Now, break off, for we shall be interrupted. The links by the sea-shore to the east of Wolf's-hope — the hour sun-rise — our swords our only weapons."

"Enough," said the Master, "I will not fail you."

They separated; Colonel Ashton joining the rest of the mourners, and the Master of Ravenswood taking his horse, which was tied to a tree behind the church. Colonel Ashton returned to the castle with the funeral guests, but found a pretext for detaching himself from them in the evening, when, changing his dress to a riding



habit, he rode to Wolf's-hope that night, and took up his abode in the little inn, in order that he might be ready for his rendez-vous in the morning.

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turn, he had usually occupied, Ravenswood stopped short on the threshold.

"Not here," said he, sternly; "show me the room in which my father died; the room in which *she* slept the night they were at the castle."

"Who, sir?" said Caleb, too terrified to preserve his presence of mind.

"*She*, Lucy Ashton! — would you kill me, old man, by forcing me to repeat her name?"

Caleb would have said something of the disrepair of the chamber, but was silenced by the irritable impatience which was expressed in his master's countenance; he lighted the way trembling and in silence, placed the lamp on the table of the deserted room, and was about to attempt some arrangement of the bed, when his master bid him begone in a tone that admitted of no delay. The old man retired, not to rest, but to prayer; and from time to time crept to the door of the apartment, in order to find out whether Ravenswood had gone to repose. His measured heavy step upon the floor was only interrupted by deep groans; and the repeated stamps of the heel of his heavy boot, intimated too clearly, that the wretched inmate was abandoning himself at such moments to paroxysms of uncontrouled agony. The old man thought that the morning, for which he longed, would never have dawned; but time, whose



course rolls on with equal current, however it may seem more rapid or more slow to mortal apprehension, brought the dawn at last, and spread a ruddy light on the broad verge of the glistening ocean. It was early in November, and the weather was serene for the season of the year. But an easterly wind had prevailed during the night, and the advancing tide rolled nearer than usual to the foot of the crags on which the castle was founded.

With the first peep of light, Caleb Balderstone again resorted to the door of Ravenswood's sleeping apartment, through a chink of which he observed him engaged in measuring the length of two or three swords which lay in a closet adjoining to the apartment. He muttered to himself, as he selected one of these weapons, "It is shorter — let him have this advantage as he has every other."

Caleb Balderstone knew too well, from what he witnessed, upon what enterprise his master was bound, and how vain all interference on his part must necessarily prove. He had but time to retreat from the door, so nearly was he surprised by his master suddenly coming out, and descending to the stables. The faithful domestic followed, and from the dishevelled appearance of his master's dress, and his ghastly looks, was confirmed in his conjecture that he



had passed the night without sleep or repose. He found him busily engaged in saddling his horse, a service from which Caleb, though with faltering voice and trembling hands, offered to relieve him. Ravenswood rejected his assistance by a mute sign, and having led the animal into the court, was just about to mount him, when the old domestic's fear giving way to the strong attachment which was the principal passion of his mind, he flung himself suddenly at Ravenswood's feet, and clasped his knees, while he exclaimed, "Oh, sir! oh, master! kill me if you will, but do not go out on this dreadful errand. O! my dear master, wait but this day — the Marquis of A—— comes tomorrow, and a' will be remedied."

"You have no longer a master, Caleb," said Ravenswood, endeavouring to extricate himself; "why, old man, would you cling to a falling tower?"

"But I *have* a master," cried Caleb, still holding him fast, "while the heir of Ravenswood breathes. I am but a servant; but I was your father's — your grandfather's — I was born for the family — I have lived for them — I would die for them — Stay but at home, and all will be well!"

"Well? fool! well?" said Ravenswood; "vain old man, nothing hereafter in life will be well



with me, and happiest is the hour that shall soonest close it."

So saying, he extricated himself from the old man's hold, threw himself on his horse, and rode out at the gate; but instantly turning back, he threw towards Caleb, who hastened to meet him, a heavy purse of gold.

"Caleb," he said, with a ghastly smile, "I make you my executor;" and again turning his bridle, he resumed his course down the hill.

The gold fell unheeded on the pavement, for the old man ran to observe the course which was taken by his master, who turned to the left down a small and broken path, which gained the sea-shore through a cleft in the rock, and led to a sort of cove, where, in former times, the boats of the castle were wont to be moored. Observing him take this course, Caleb hastened to the eastern battlement, which commanded the prospect of the whole sands, very near as far as the village of Wolf's-hope. He could easily see his master riding in that direction, as fast as the horse could carry him. The prophecy at once rushed on Balderstone's mind, that the Lord of Ravenswood should perish on the Kelpie's Flow, which lay half way betwixt the tower and the links or sand-knolls, to the north-east of Wolf's-hope. He saw him accord-



ingly reach the fatal spot, but he never saw him pass further.

Colonel Ashton, frantic for revenge, was already in the field, pacing the turf with eagerness, and looking with impatience towards the tower for the arrival of his antagonist. The sun had now risen, and shewed its broad disk above the eastern sea, so that he could easily discern the horseman who rode towards him with speed which argued impatience equal to his own. At once the figure became invisible, as if it had melted into the air. He rubbed his eyes, as if he had witnessed an apparition, and then hastened to the spot, near which he was met by Balderstone, who came from the opposite direction. No trace whatever of horse or rider could be discerned; it only appeared, that the late winds and high tides had greatly extended the usual bounds of the quicksand, and that the unfortunate horseman, as appeared from the hoof-tracks, in his precipitate haste, had not attended to keep on the firm sandson the foot of the rock, but had taken the shortest and most dangerous course. One only vestige of his fate appeared. A large sable feather had been detached from his hat, and the rippling waves of the rising tide wafted it to Caleb's feet. The old man took it up, dried it, and placed it in his bosom.



The inhabitants of Wolf's hope were now alarmed, and crowded to the place, some on shore, and some in boats, but their search availed nothing. The tenacious depths of the quicksand, as is usual in such cases, retained their prey.

Our tale draws to a conclusion. The Marquis of A ——, alarmed at the frightful reports that were current, and anxious for his kinsman's safety, arrived on the subsequent day to mourn his loss; and, after renewing in vain a search for the body, returned to forget what had happened amid the bustle of politics and state affairs.

Not so Caleb Balderstone. If worldly profit could have consoled the old man, his age was better provided for than his earlier life had ever been; but life had lost to him its salt and its savour. His whole course of ideas, his feelings, whether of pride or of apprehension, of pleasure or of pain, had all arisen from his close connection with the family which was now extinguished. He held up his head no longer — forsook all his usual haunts and occupations, and seemed only to find pleasure in mopeing about those apartments in the old castle, which the Master of Ravenswood had last inhabited. He ate without refreshment, and slumbered without repose; and, with a fidelity sometimes dis-



played by the canine race, but seldom by human beings, he pined and died within a year after the catastrophe which we have narrated.

The family of Ashton did not long survive that of Ravenswood. Sir William Ashton survived his eldest son, the Colonel, who was slain in a duel in Flanders; and Henry, by whom he was succeeded, died unmarried. Lady Ashton lived to the verge of extreme old age, the only survivor of the group of unhappy persons, whose misfortunes were owing to her implacability. That she might internally feel compunction, and reconcile herself with heaven whom she had offended, we will not, and we dare not deny; but to those around her, she did not evince the slightest symptom either of repentance or remorse. In all external appearance, she bore the same bold, haughty, unbending character, which she had displayed before these unhappy events. A splendid marble monument records her name, titles, and virtues, while her victims remain undistinguished by tomb or epitaph.







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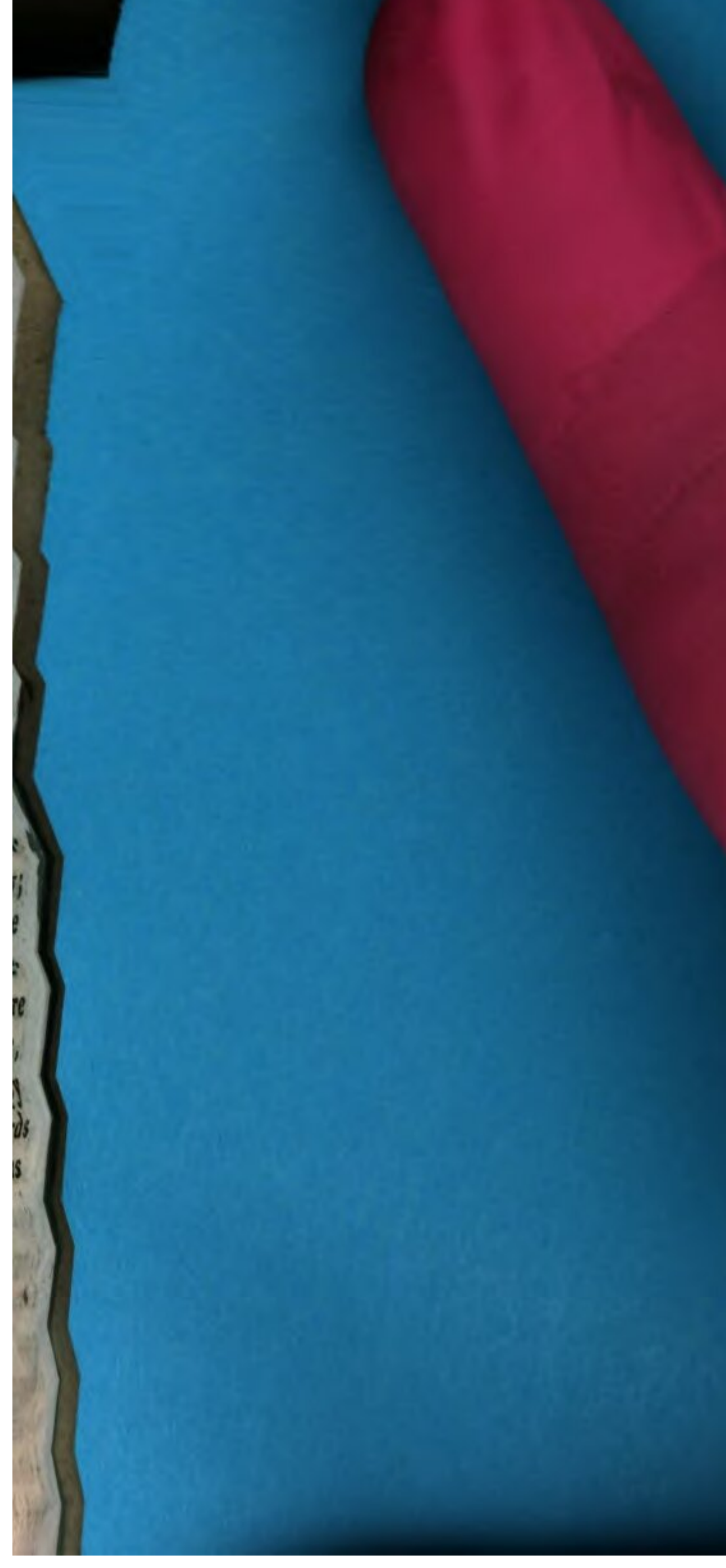




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Scott, Walter, 1771-1832

Tales of my landlord

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